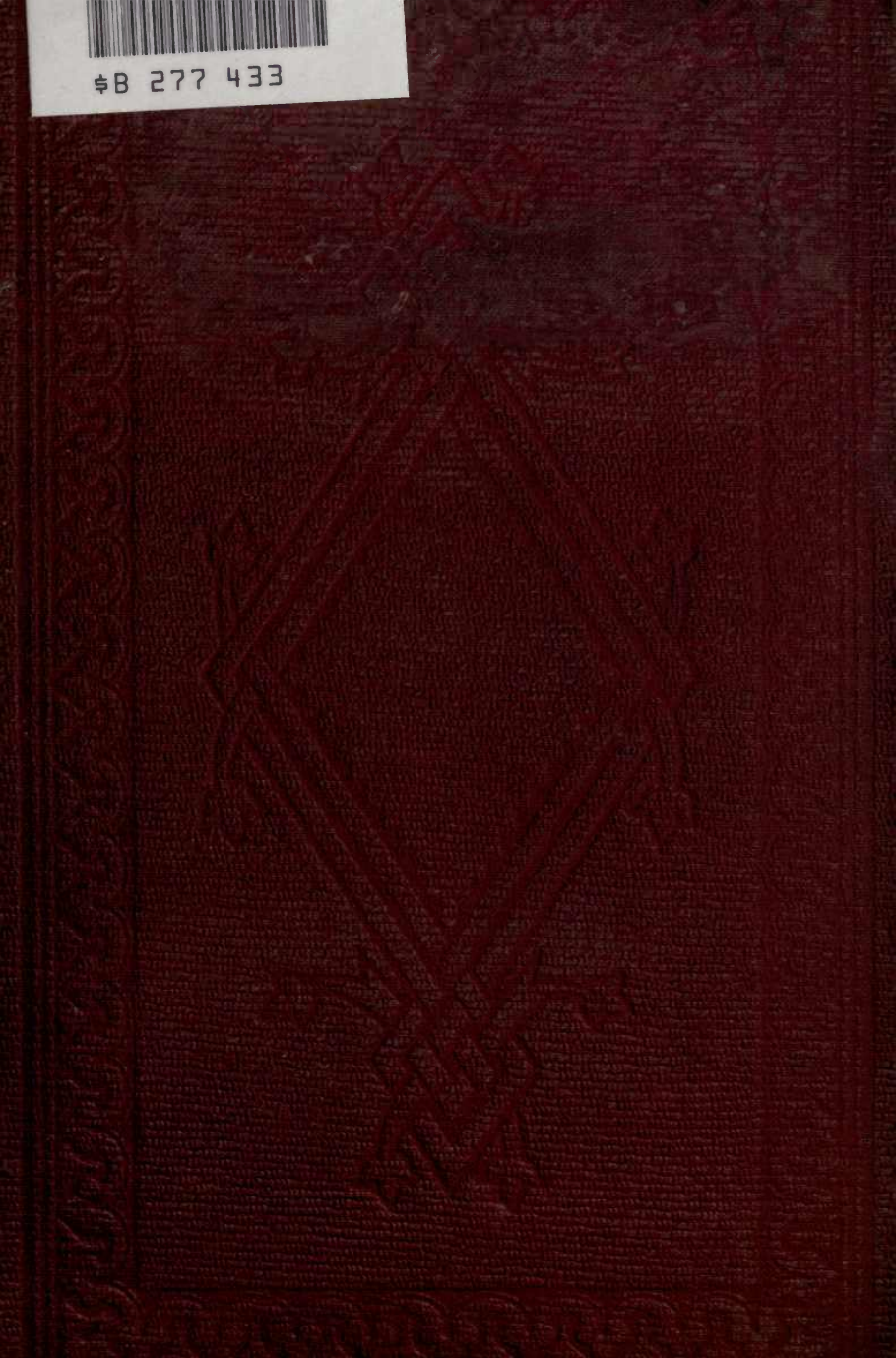




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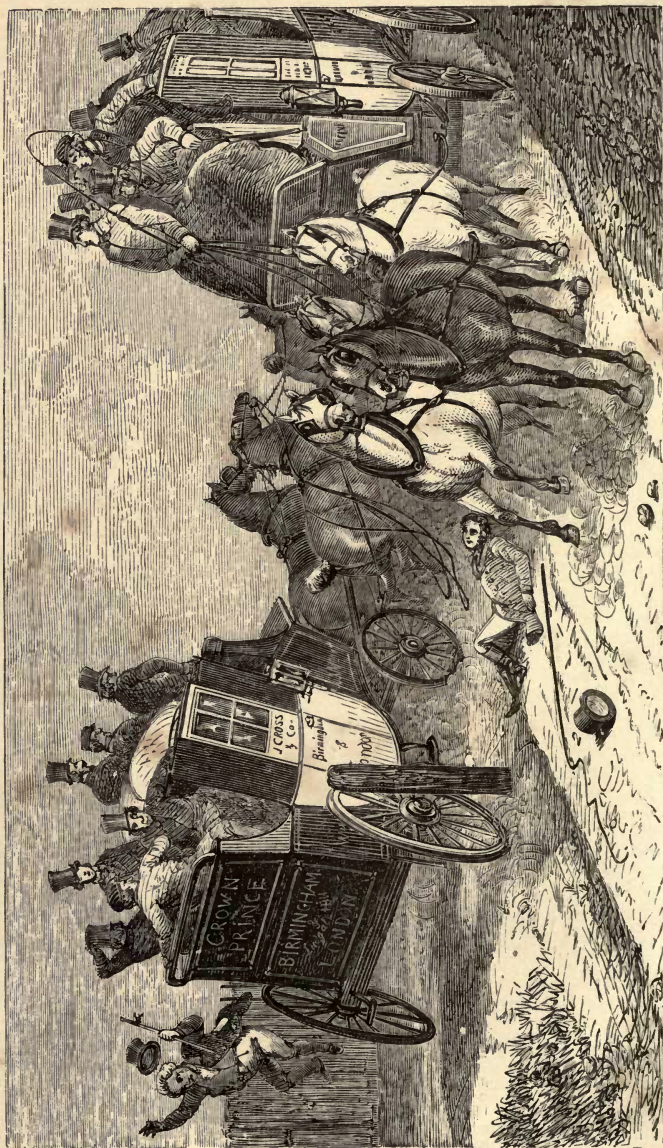


THE
AUTOBIOGRAPHY
OF A
STAGE-COACHMAN.

AUTOTHOGRAPHY

STAGE-GOACHMAN





THE COLLISION

THE
AUTOBIOGRAPHY
OF A
STAGE-COACHMAN.

BY
THOMAS CROSS.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A STAGE-COACHMAN.

CHAPTER I.

PROSPERITY CONTINUED.

A Long Frost—Fair on the Thames—Journey to the North—Guinea Pigs—A Younger Brother—Charming Domicile—Edinburgh—Messrs. J. and J. Ballantyne—Departure—Deep Snow—Pleasant Ride by Moonlight—Carlisle—Liverpool—Delightful Companions—A Morning's Walk—Peace—Two False Steps—A Master of Hounds—Our Peoples—Scene in a Wood—A Yorkshire Tyke—Laughing Philosophy—Whitechapel—Somerset House—Portsmouth Dockyard—The Commissioner.

I OUGHT to have stated that the year 1814

—a year big with events of vast importance to the nations of Europe—was introduced by a frost which, for its intensity and length of duration, has not been equalled in England in the memory of that respectable authority the oldest inhabitant. It was general throughout the Island, and was accompanied in many parts with a great fall of snow. Communication by coach or carriage of any sort was, on many roads, for a while suspended. Even postal arrivals and departures were uncertain, and the mailbags to important cities and commercial towns could only be conveyed on horses' backs.

A general holiday seemed to be established in London. The Thames was frozen over, and a fair held daily on the ice. A bullock was roasted whole near the spot where the middle arch of the present bridge now stands. Crowds

of people, vieing with each other in the richness or gaudiness of their attire, flocked at the risk of their lives to witness this unprecedented exhibition, as they have since done to see the performance of some favourite actor, and as they now do to listen to a popular preacher—all for the same reason, to the same purpose, and with the same effect.

I have been thus particular in recording this remarkable variation in our temperate climate, because circumstances called me a distance of nearly 500 miles from home, a journey at that time requiring some little stamina and exertion.

My next brother, about three years younger than myself, had chosen to be a printer; he was accordingly apprenticed to the Messrs. Hansard, the king's printers; and his time having nearly expired, it was thought advisable, to

complete his instruction in this widespread art, that he should spend the last year or two with the Messrs. Ballantyne, of Edinburgh, whose establishment was then considered the most complete in Europe. The terms being settled, I was sent for to accompany him to the northern capital. Although I had my hands full, and could but ill afford the time it would take from my business, I was rather pleased than otherwise at the prospect of the journey.

I quitted home the last day of the old year; and, leaving my wife and child with my married sister at their comfortable house on the Downs, drove to Petersfield, where I got into the night coach, and arrived safe in London the following morning. The next day we started from the "Saracen's Head," Snow Hill, in the old York coach, the "Nelson." There had been as yet no stoppages on

that line of road; still the journey was most tedious, even for those times; while, to relieve the weariness, I once or twice got out, thinking to divert myself with driving; but, what with slippery roads, bad cattle, and worse tackle, I could make no hand of it, and was glad to get inside again to preserve myself from the bitter, biting atmosphere.

Arriving at the "Cock," at Eaton, a large coach and posting-house, our first coachman left us; and the guard, giving the way-bill to the proprietor, informed him who we were, when he became very attentive and courteous to us.

In those times the London man was held in great estimation by the country proprietors; and so far had this feeling been carried by my father's predecessor, that he was almost worshipped by them. This arose chiefly from his gentlemanly manners and good principles, so widely

different from the low cunning and paltry means that were afterwards practised.

Now, the guard had taken up two soldiers on the road, and from good feeling, as I thought, had, not long before we stopped, put them into the hind boot, and covered them up—the boots in those times being made very spacious, and opening at the top.

On coming out from the house, where we had taken some refreshment, the proprietor took his leave of us; and his notice being attracted to the hind boot, he called the guard, and asked him what he had got there.

“Only a couple of guinea pigs, sir,” said the guard, very innocently, not observing the leakage that had caused his master’s question, and perhaps aroused his suspicion, and was proceeding to his seat.

“Stop!” said the master; “I never

saw a guinea-pig." Getting on the hind wheel, he opened the boot and looked in, when, to his great surprise, he saw two grenadiers.

"Well," said he, looking at the guard, "they are two beauties; where did you bring them from, guard?"

This was rather a question *ad hominum*. My brother and I getting in, we did not hear any more of the dialogue, and saw no more of the guinea-pigs.

After travelling all that night we arrived at York the next afternoon, when, in dismissing the guard with his fee, my brother, who would be a little wag-gish, observed that guinea-pigs were pretty things, but not always agreeable in the sight of strangers.

We continued our journey to Newcastle, where we arrived the following evening. Having acquired an additional number of passengers—it was a six in-

side coach—the dull monotony of the surrounding country, covered, as it were, with one white sheet, calling for little or no observation, could only be relieved by conversation; and my brother, who possessed a good flow of animal spirits, kept us alive by some piquant remark on every little occurrence, or by otherwise evoking the laughter of us all by his powers of mimicry, which he would exercise indiscriminately on those present as well as absent.

He was altogether an oddity, and had a strong inkling for the stage; and when I mention that the celebrated Keeley was his brother apprentice and close associate, the reader will not wonder at his imbibing and possessing a fund of amusement, aided as he was by a comic expression of countenance.

At Newcastle we slept, and very glad was I to get a night's rest, though it

proved a short one, for the coach left early next morning for Edinburgh, where we arrived about eleven at night.

We took up our quarters at the hotel where the coach stopped, and were conducted to the very top of one of the lofty houses in the old town of Edinburgh. The room we were conducted to for our domicile, with its furniture, was of the meanest description, and void of every comfort; and I went to sleep with but a poor opinion of the cleanliness of the inhabitants of the modern Athens, when I lay down on what was not worthy to be called a bed.

In the morning I awoke in the greatest fright, for on my eyelids gradually relaxing, my sight rested on an immense rat on my shoulders, that sat gazing full in my face. My shouts of fear or horror drove the hateful vermin

away, and roused my brother from his slumbers, who jumped to my assistance, supposing I had suffered some grievous injury. I soon recovered my senses, and hastily dressing ourselves, we beat a retreat from this filthy cock-loft.

On remonstrating with the landlord on the badness of our accommodation, and assuring him we were neither recruits nor tramps, he apologized by saying he was gone to bed when the coach arrived, and was not aware what part of the house had been allotted for our dormitory.

I then presented him with one of my father's cards, and stated we were going to call on the Messrs. Ballantyne, if he would have the goodness to direct us.

The latter name was sufficient to call forth all his attention, and to insure us more agreeable treatment.

After performing our toilets in a far different apartment, and partaking of an excellent breakfast, we went out; and it being Sunday, we entered the first place of worship we came to, which happened to be a newly-constructed edifice, a church of considerable dimensions, but by no means too large for the congregation.

The service—which did not impress me with that humble though awful adoration of the Deity which our own sublime liturgy never fails to do—being over, I went at once to deliver my credentials at the house of the firm.

I cannot say distinctly which of the gentlemen I saw, but I felt from the length of our conversation—which terminated in an invitation to dinner—that I had not made a very bad impression, while our new acquaintances' very urbane manner was equally satisfactory to me.

We returned after visiting Arthur's Seat and Holyrood, and I spent, I think, one of the most pleasant evenings I ever remember—the conversation turning principally upon the literary productions of the day.

The author of Waverley was not then known, but speaking of the poetic works of Walter Scott, Ballantyne seemed very attentive when I expressed my admiration of the "Lady of the Lake," the simplicity of the tale, and the beauty of the imagery, and attempted to point out good specimens of his powers of description, as well as of his genius, displayed in grouping and classifying the characteristics of his native country.

On the Monday morning I again called, and after permanently settling my brother, took leave of my hospitable and very intelligent entertainer.

The weather, which had been particularly

bright, though extremely cold, changed on Monday and became very gloomy.

Anticipating a heavy fall of snow, that might cause me to be pent up in Edinburgh, I got into the Carlisle mail that stood at the door of the hotel, as soon as I had discharged my bill, and taking an affectionate leave of my brother, was quickly outside the Canongate.

My companions, three in number, proved to be coach proprietors, who lived at different stages, and disappeared one after the other, till I was left quite alone.

The snow, as I thought it would, had commenced, and had already obliterated all appearance of a track or road. While stopping, I asked the guard the cause of the uneasy motion I had experienced. He told me that the vehicle was obliged to deviate from the road, in consequence of the obstructions the snow had created.

Arriving, after some little delay, at Hawick, I was shown into a parlour where blazed a beautiful fire, which seemed to offer me a warm welcome, I felt very much disposed to accept.

Presently I was told by a tall Scotch damsel that the coach could not proceed any farther, and that the coachman and guard of the down mail had arrived with the horses and bags, having left the coach in the road, it being quite impassable for wheel carriages.

This was bad news for me; however, I sat myself down by the fire, and had resolved to make myself content; but the thoughts of home, and a business, distant between 400 and 500 miles, would obtrude, and knowing some of the roads had been closed already two or three weeks, I could not calculate how long I might be detained in so lonely a region, away from every one I knew. I rung

the bell, and asked if the coachman and guard were going on with the bags; and was informed that they were just then about to proceed on horseback. I asked if I might accompany them, and was answered in the affirmative; not without some doubts as to the probability of my doing so. I looked out—the snow was falling fast in large flakes; it was about midnight, and our excursion through the mountains of Cumberland, which I had only heard of through the magnifying qualities of the tourist, seemed anything but pleasant; nevertheless, I thought I had been out in worse weather, and there appeared no more dangers or disagreeables for me than for the men. I therefore gave instructions for my portmanteau, and a small hamper of genuine mountain-dew, which the host at Edinburgh had kindly procured for me, to be forwarded as soon as the road was

open, according to the direction ; and requested, at the same time, a saddle might be put for me on one of the horses. Then tossing off a glass of whiskey-toddy, I took leave of the Scotch damsel; and, mounting a groggy, stale old animal, a pet of the Scotch coachman, who was not well pleased at my warming him up a little with the ash-plant I always carried with me, we commenced a two-and-twenty miles stage.

Such travelling would perhaps be scarcely worth recording ; but it bore such a novel appearance to me at the time, the country too being altogether so strange, I could not help afterwards clothing it in my memory with rather an odd-coloured robe, and considering it as approaching to a romantic adventure.

The road seemed to lay chiefly in a valley, now and then crossing a little

stream, that wound between the hills, and the snow having drifted, it required the utmost caution to prevent the animal I rode from floundering or falling in the snow, as he was continually plunging up to his girth. After proceeding about seven miles, where the silence of the night was only broken by the occasional discharge of a fowling-piece, suggesting the retreat of the French in the wilds of Russia and Poland that occurred in the previous winter, we observed the down mail, with only a small part of the roof visible, the other portion being completely covered with snow.

Three miles farther we turned out of the road to an inn, or farm-house, where my two companions refreshed themselves with whiskey, in which I joined them, to drown all animosity that had arisen, about the ill-treatment the superb animal

that had been placed at my service had received at my hands.

On remounting, the falling of snow which had fallen in great quantities began to abate, and shortly after, the weather clearing up, the moon, which was at the full, shone forth with a beautiful soft light, to which the snow-covered hills and dales served as strong reflectors. Arriving at Langholm, a distance of, as I said before, twenty-two miles, the guard ordered a post-chaise and four to Longtown, where, when we changed horses, we found the road perfectly clear and hard, no snow having fallen there.

Anxious to get to Carlisle, in time for the mail to Liverpool, I promised the boys a crown a-piece if they could accomplish that object; this they did to a minute, and giving them the promised reward I got into the mail, after hastily swallowing a cup of hot coffee.

A long day's ride, tedious indeed to me, brought us to Liverpool at half-past three the following morning; and, knowing the coach for London, of which my father was part proprietor, left at six, I did not take my clothes off, but lay down for an hour or two. Sleep I could not; and therefore, directed by the boots, I got up and walked to the "Saracen's Head," in Dale Street. It wanting an hour to the time of the coach's starting, I enquired of the book-keeper what room there was, and on his telling me there was a vacancy for one, I desired him to put my name down. On informing him who I was, he immediately sent for his master, as he was sure he would be extremely angry if he knew I had been in Liverpool and he had not seen me.

This Mr. Brotherton was a gentleman of a much higher standard than country proprietors attained generally. He was highly

connected in this large commercial town—indeed, he has since risen to considerable wealth and importance in it; and I could but feel myself flattered with this mark of attention. He pressed me very hard to stop a day with him, but I was so bent on getting home as speedily as possible, that I politely declined; and, after half-an-hour's chat, chiefly on business affairs, I took my leave of him, and got into the coach.

My companions were a gentleman and his two daughters, from the West Indies, one of whom carried a parrot, and the other a small monkey, in their respective laps. With this company was I doomed to sit, cramped up, as it were, in a band-box, two long days and a night—for we did not arrive in London till seven the next evening—and glad was I to have got thus far on my journey homeward.

After stopping the following day in London, I proceeded by the night-coach to Horndean, from whence I had to walk a mile up a narrow lane, into which the snow had drifted, and had become frozen in places, so that this became really the most dangerous part of my long and arduous journey; for falling up to my shoulders in the drift, I was only extricated by some labouring men who were going early to their work. Thus I accomplished my task—that is, had travelled nearly 1,100 miles in eleven days, and had been up seven nights out of the eleven—a feat not very common in such an unpleasant season.

This long frost, which lasted thirteen weeks, and did not break up till the last day in March, was followed by a delightful spring and summer, which gave additional enjoyment to the festivities and rejoicings that took place all over the

kingdom, in consequence of the successful termination of the longest and most expensive war in which the country had ever been engaged. Joy seemed to be lit up in every countenance ; and the continual arrival of soldiers and sailors from foreign stations, with the sudden revival of commerce, caused such an increase of travelling, that conveyances could scarcely be found, or sufficient accommodation afforded, to the numerous visitors and pleasure-seekers at the different watering places and towns of fashionable resort.

All this was most beneficial to my father's extensive concern ; but he had already found, or fancied he had found, the management of such a business beyond his capacity. This, added to an attack of illness, arising principally from too great anxiety, and the vexation he had already experienced from the com-

bined opposition of the other London proprietors, some of whom were glad to to join the unprincipled man my father's money had released from his difficulties—induced him, very injudiciously, to take in a partner.

This was the first step in the wrong direction; for no good could possibly ensue from his making over one-half of what was then just becoming remunerative to a person without capital, whose principal recommendation was the power he possessed of effecting a reconciliation between my father and the man who had already caused him so much injury.

This was done, and things went on swimmingly for a time, shortly after which death called away that arch-enemy of our family; and my father's disposition may be judged of, when he was induced by his partner to follow his remains to the grave.

I need not pursue my parent's unfortunate career any more than to state, that this ill-assorted partnership lasted but eighteen months, when the person my father put such faith in, cunning in his generation, withdrew, having reaped the benefit of two summers, when the business was most lucrative, to one winter, when it was least so; and on the opening of the following spring; tired, distressed, and broken down in mind almost, my father parted with this extensive concern at a great sacrifice, to those who have since built upon his ruin an immense fortune. Such are the vicissitudes of life! Had he retained possession but a little longer, Government, that is, the Commissioners of Woods and Forests, would have bought, as they did buy, the premises, and he would have reaped the benefit as well from that, as from the large sums received by the princi-

pal London proprietors on the first introduction of railroads; and by this, if by no other means, he would have been enabled to have saved himself from that ruin which ultimately overtook him.

I was still in prosperous circumstances, and, being fond of outdoor exercise and employment, took a small farm, to which was attached a large tract of land, which was allotted to the owner by the Commissioners for enclosing the Bere Forest—and this was the first step I took in the wrong direction, involving as it did a considerable outlay of capital, which might have been employed in a more profitable direction.

Nevertheless, it gave me a strong relish and a farther opportunity of indulging in the sports of the field, and was a more general introduction to the yeomanry and gentry of the county,

as I still constantly hunted with the Hambledon, and sometimes with the Hampshire hounds. Here I cannot help relating a most ludicrous incident I witnessed.

The master of the Hambledon hounds at that time, however strange it may appear, was a wealthy Dutch Jew, partaking very much of the Dutch style of build, being short, thick, and round, as his mind did of the peculiar propensities of *our people*, as the following anecdote will show:

Giving a dinner one day to the neighbouring gentry, at which he made a great display, "according to the custom of the Jews," one of his guests, the master of the H.H.* than whom a better sportsman, or a kinder master or a gentleman more respected never lived in the county, accidentally broke

* Truman Villebois, Esq.

a beautiful china dessert plate. This was not unobserved by the host, who said, in his broken dialect—

“Got plesh my soul, every voun of dose plates cost me a guinea!”

Whereupon the offender put his hand in his pocket, and taking out a coin of that value, jauntingly threw it towards the head of the table. The company expressed their surprise by their looks, but they did more by their smiles when they saw their host quietly take it up and put it in his pocket!

As he lived in a mansion adjoining the Hampshire country, he sometimes hunted with them on the alternate day with his own. One morning, when the former met at Beworth Cross-roads, finding a fox in Thorley Wood, always a certain find, we run him to Blackhouse, where we came to a check. The Dutch gentleman, with others, were quietly seat-

ed on their horses, not smoking their cigars, as is now so much the fashion, but waiting the effects of a *cast* that the master was making—a scientific acquirement necessary to the proper understanding of this noble sport, in which he excelled—when suddenly the hounds, hitting off the scent together, gave forth that exhilarating music, which to be appreciated must be heard in the field.

Away went the horses, but not all their riders, for our friend, the Jew, was caught up like Absalom, in the tree under which he was sitting, while his horse went clean from under him; and presently after gesticulating and howling, down dropped this scarlet bundle of oddities, like an over-ripened apple, demonstrating, as Newton's did, the centre of gravity as he came on a moist spot of his mother-earth; while his companions, galloping away, had only time to look back

on their saddles, and smile at the very ludicrous appearance he made.

Upon another occasion, when, after a sharp run, we had killed our fox in a farm-yard, near Droxford, and stood waiting the arrival of the master of the pack, he came trotting in at the gate with his habitual smile, when, in endeavouring to cross the yard, his horse suddenly sunk up to the girth in the straw that covered lightly the manure. The more the animal plunged the deeper he went in the mire, when the alarmed Jew, supposing he was going to the bottomless-pit, and the disposal of his ill-gotten wealth occurring to him at the same time, exclaimed with extended arms and terror-stricken visage:—

“My wife, my wife! I leave all to my wife!”

Many other ludicrous feats I could recount of this redoubtable follower of

Nimrod, who was the laughing-stock of the county—but let the above suffice.

The sudden appearance of this strange gentleman, in one of the first mansions in the county, was a mystery; his antecedents were not known, and the manner in which he became possessed of so much wealth was a secret—a secret which is ever held most sacred by the children of Abraham.

It was, however, generally reported and believed, that when the great Napoleon's star was approaching its apogee, this gentleman was employed by that military chief to levy contributions on the inhabitants of Belgium and Holland, and upon the sudden and successful outbreak of Orange Boven, that caused the man who had trodden upon the laws and liberties of the Batavian Republic to retire behind the Rhine, the Jew had not an opportunity of discharging his duties to a fallen

Government; and thinking that both his person and his property, consisting of the money he had thus borrowed of his countrymen, would be safer under British protection, he wisely crossed the channel, knowing that no questions would be asked, as to the means he employed to become the possessor of that which all classes here so devotedly worship.

But to the praise of this gentleman it must be recorded, that he kept a good house and gave sumptuous entertainments, taking occasion to observe to his guests, as his daughters one after the other left the dining-room, "Dare goes dirty dousand pounds—dare goes dirty dousand more;" and notwithstanding all these oddities, was most kind and charitable to the poor of the Parishes of Westmeon and Warnford, among whom his name will long be remembered.

It will not be difficult for the reader

to understand how the first four years of my married life was passed. In the full enjoyment of health, as well as domestic comfort and happiness, moving in good society, and with a business hitherto lucrative, to which I gave all the attention I could, the love of field-sports did but little, if at all, interfere with it: I could not control, though I partly foresaw the circumstances that accomplished my fall from a position I had held, with credit, and in which I had gained the good will and esteem of those who had known me both abroad and at home.

Among the persons who came within the circle of my acquaintance, but with whom I was not on terms of intimacy, was one of rather strange appearance. He possessed very soft and, to some, pleasing, but by no means polished, manners, and always addressed every one with a smile.

Now, I myself experienced no wrong from this person ; and though I was his stepping-stone to fortune, it is not for me to judge how he was enabled to take that step. The first time I saw him, when he was not in very good odour with his fortune or his friends, was in a bookseller's shop I frequented. On one occasion, a stranger—a traveller, I suppose—came in, and, eyeing this gentleman as he made his exit, asked his name. On being told—

“Ah, I thought so,” he said ; “I thought I remembered him as one of eleven that ran away from a school at Durham, and out of the eleven seven have been hung.”

This might have been a little *jeu d'esprit* of the stranger's, but I do not forget it ; for he was a North countryman, and might have fallen under the designation of a Yorkshire tyke, had

he not had more lofty aspirations ; neither did I forget his habitual smile, which gained for him in the betting-ring the *soubriquet* of "Silky," and which I always call to mind when I reflect on a maxim I afterwards found in my journey through life to be correct : "The man who always laughs or smiles is a fool ;—the man who never laughs nor smiles is a misanthrope ; but he who always smiles and never laughs is a deep, crafty, designing person."

With this gentleman was I induced to join in a contract to do the horsework in the dockyard at Portsmouth. At the time he was clerk, at a small salary, to the then contractors, who, with the hopes of getting more money, had given notice to the Government of their intention to better their position, little supposing their own servant was going to supplant them. Of this I

knew nothing, and perhaps considered as little, as I was too glad to entertain a project that, if well carried out, would make up for that deficiency in my revenue likely to accrue from a too speedy falling off in my own legitimate business, which the peace and the competition for public favour, in establishing faster and more expensive conveyances, was likely to bring about.

The escape of the ex-Emperor from Elba had renewed the war, and raised the hopes of those who, like myself, anticipated a further benefit from it, but these the decisive battle of Waterloo now rendered illusory; and I thought I was taking a step in the right direction when I acceded to the proposal made me, which was to put in a tender at the Navy-office, Somerset House, for the supply of 140 horses, to do the work in the dockyard, at a certain sum

per team of four horses and a man per diem.

Now, my intended partner did no discredit to his birthplace, or his bringing up ; for, like his countrymen, he was a man of shrewd intellect and keen perception, my senior in age by eleven or twelve years, and had made his calculations on such a scale as almost to ensure the reception of our tender, as well as to avoid the great error of being below what might be, indeed, what was, a remunerative price.

Accordingly we attended at Somerset House on the day and hour appointed, which was two o'clock in the afternoon. We spent the morning, I remember, in going to Whitechapel, and seeking out what was a great object of interest and curiosity—that is, the birth-place of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, four infants of whom a poor woman had recently been delivered.

We had not been in attendance a quarter of an hour before my name was called by the messenger, who escorted me to the room where the commissioners were assembled. After a few questions, which I answered to their satisfaction, I named two bondsmen, of whom my father was one, and the contract was mine, and mine alone ; for they would hear nothing of any second person—I must take it entirely on my own responsibility.

When I retired, and reported the result of my interview to my friend, he was a little disconcerted ; but on my assuring him that I could and should still fulfil my agreement, he professed to be satisfied.

We afterwards dined with my father, who wished us joy of our bargain, and drank success to its result. In about six weeks we entered on our contract,

I transacting all the business with the dockyard officials, while he superintended the supply of provender for the horses.

This brought me in frequent personal communication with the excellent officer who so long held the office of Commissioner, and performed all its duties with a dignity that sometimes astonished the subordinates, but at the same time with solid advantage to the country.

His religious views were not quite consonant with the doctrines of the talented and truly orthodox preacher who occupied the pulpit in the dockyard Chapel; and their dispositions were neither of them sufficiently pliable to prevent now and then an outbreak or unseemly altercation, which, to the best of my belief, terminated in the resignation of the reverend gentleman.

It was many years after this, when, accompanied on the box by a minister

of the Crown, and a near relative of the distinguished officer I have been speaking of, that the conversation, turning on nautical subjects, I named many officers of high rank and distinction, and my right honourable companion asked me if I had ever been acquainted with the Commissioner of Portsmouth dockyard, and requested to hear what I knew of him.

I stated, in reply, that I had known him many years ; and described him as in person of a very commanding appearance, remarkably upright in his carriage—which is not very common with those of the most aristocratic birth, who have spent their youth on board ship—with rather an austere expression of countenance. I said that his manner to those who did not know him would be, indeed was, set down as haughty in the extreme ; and that though I always found him

affable and polite, it was reported that he carried a brace of loaded pistols about with him, in his breast pocket.

"Indeed!" said the Secretary to the Treasury, for such he was; "for what purpose, in God's name, did he do that?"

"To shoot the first man he met prouder than himself," I replied.

At this he smiled complacently, assuring me that he should certainly take the first opportunity of making known to the Commissioner the information he had thus acquired.

CHAPTER II.

REVERSE OF FORTUNE.

A Wet Season—Beneficial Farming—A Racing Stud—A Commissary—Petworth—Duke of Somerset—Seymour the Painter—Scene in a Brook—An Alarming Purchase—Contagion—Pathology—Naval Captain—Domestic Calamity—Alterations and Improvements—An Unblushing Villain—Driving Clubs—A Saturnalia—Comparison—An Attraction—A Final Resolution.

I WOULD willingly draw a veil over this part of my history, for it brings to my memory many circumstances of a sorrowful nature, as well as an accumulation of losses of no ordinary occurrence, though at the risk of being accused of possessing a mock or morbid

sensibility; but as it is necessary to connect my former life with the character I have assumed in the title-page, I shall proceed, however reluctantly, to give it a place in this narrative.

Some of my readers will be able to call to mind the disastrous year of 1816, more particularly those engaged in agricultural pursuits. This, it may be remembered, was a very wet season, so much so, that in some parts of the country the harvest was not gathered in till October or November, and I have since heard from undoubted authority that beans were standing in the field at Christmas.

Now, I have before related that I had hired a farm, of not very large dimensions, certainly about 120 acres, to which was attached 200 acres of unbroke land, consisting chiefly of forest. The timber, with the expense of cutting it, was the landlord's, but clearing the land of the moors

or roots and getting it in order for cultivation, was the tenant's.

Thus, what with grubbing, clearing, chalking, and well manuring, I had laid out half the value of the fee-simple of the land, when my first crop of wheat, which bid fair to remunerate me in a great measure for all my outlay, was beaten down from its weight by incessant rains, and became mildewed, blighted, and germinated.

The first shower fell, I remember, on Midsummer-day, up to which time the weather had been remarkably fine, and scarcely a day passed after, up to Michaelmas, without rain. My clover and grass crops were already for the most part in swarth, and after repeated attempts to cart, and the people constantly on the watch to take advantage of the least appearance of sunshine, all our endeavours to stack the clover were fruitless, and we were

obliged to draw it into the yard to make room for the second crop, which had already begun to peer above its drenched predecessor—reminding one of the Frenchman in the late Charles Matthew's comic tale, "whose hair grew a little above his hat."

My wheat I did not gather till the last week in September, and that not till after a long and expensive time, with all my Lent corn, in the damaged condition I have stated.

We had had a most propitious spring—everything looked well on the farm, the crops of corn most luxuriant, and the cattle—sheep I had but few—having no summer food, in a thriving condition: among them three thorough-bred mares, two by Haphazard, the other by Buzzard, and a splendid grey two-years old colt, by Evander, which, with another yearling colt, by Trophonius, entered in a hundred

guinea sweepstake at Goodwood, I had purchased at Tattersall's, all having been the property of a deceased trainer and owner.

These all, as if by a fatality, fell one after the other in this same autumn. The grey, for which I had been offered 200*l.*, staked himself in trying to jump the palings of a lonely homestall. One mare broke her leg in leaping into the road at the sound of a postman's horn; the other, who would never take to her foal, kicked over the stall-post in the stable and was killed; and the colt that I had broke and sent into training at Winchester, preparatory to his engagement at Goodwood, for which he would have walked over, died of inflammation.

My partner in this last affair was a gentleman of considerable notoriety, who, after having gone through the Peninsular war as Commissary to the forces com-

manded by the great Duke—acting also as master of a pack of hounds kept for the amusement of the officers when the army was enclosed within the lines of Torres Vedras—had purchased a small property in the immediate neighbourhood of the farm I occupied. As our dispositions were alike in regard to the pleasures of a country life, and our love for the animal creation, we were on the best of terms; and though the irritability of his temper, and his love of command, contracted in his long military career, would sometimes cause me to suppress a laugh, when he came in contact with the simple habits of the farmer, or the rude manners of the labourer, his conversation and general deportment had a charm that chained me to his side. He was highly connected, and had married the sister of my landlord, the owner of Southwick Park, and the more than

20,000 acres that surrounded it, and had commended himself to the tenantry by the introduction of a Spanish boar, that has been the means of a great improvement in the porcine breed in that vicinity, and has tended as much to immortalize the name of William Gauntlett, Esq., as has his arduous services in the war in Portugal and Spain.

Thus did my agricultural investment receive a deadly blow from the effects of this unpropitious season, which was most severely felt by others besides myself; and thus was my injudicious speculation in blood-stock blighted in the bud; and though my practice was but short, experience has since led me to believe that the breeding and rearing such expensive animals is incompatible with the more legitimate pursuits of the practical farmer.

In the first place, it is very rare any

tract of land, whether 100 or 1000 acres, long cultivated or recently enclosed, set out for the growth of corn or the grazing of cattle, has the convenience necessary to be set apart from the rest of the farm for their support, with space enough for their daily exercise; and, in the second place, it is equally rare to find men among agricultural labourers upon whom you can rely for the care and attention that racing stock, at all seasons and at every age, require. Indeed, it seems to me to be a pursuit more fit and intended for, those noblemen and gentlemen who, besides their love of the animal, have ample domains, which they can divide and subdivide into small paddocks, adapted for either sex and all ages, and who can afford to employ men of character and judgment in their rearing and training. It is a profession of itself, and requires

skill and experience, with "all appliances and means to boot," to attain to an eminence in it — assuming fame, and not profit, to be the object.

Establishments comprising every capability for carrying out this rational and national amusement, are scattered over the country, and are to be found in almost every county in England ; but, for a regular organized system of management, and for every arrangement and convenience for the breeding, rearing, and training the race-horse, few could come up to, and none could surpass, that of the late Earl of Egremont, at Petworth.

The diversity of the soil was well calculated for every stage in the growth of this valuable animal. The rich pastures of the water-meadows gave ample nourishment to the suckling, while the dry, sandy nature of the adjacent lands,

covered with a soft, verdant turf, with a small stream of clear water running through it, was well adapted for the prevention of too great an expansion of the foot, which a naturally wet soil will frequently produce; and, from its extent, gave full scope for the frolicsome and voluntary exercise of the yearling, where he could fairly develop his quality of speed, and where, from the whole produce, the noble owner selected such as his own excellent judgment pointed out, to enter for the great prizes at Epsom, Newmarket, and elsewhere.

Paddocks, furnished with well-constructed sheds, for the reception of two, or three at most, colts or fillies, when rising two years old, were enclosed with brick or flint walls; each paddock had its attendant, to feed and water his own particular charge; which then, when fairly handled and broke, was sent to the

training stables on the Downs, where the animal was prepared to become a candidate for those great prizes so many of his lordship's horses carried away. It is only by such management and by such means, joined with a perfect knowledge of the properties of particular breeds, and first-rate judgment in selecting that with which to cross and improve his own, that any man can command a flourishing racing stud; and this falls to the lot of but few.

This magnificent establishment, so worthy alike of its purpose and its noble owner, was founded or commenced more than a century since by "the proud Duke of Somerset," as he is termed, in contradistinction to the first of his family, the virtuous, talented, and popular, but unfortunate Protector, who deserved the title of Great—and descended with the mansion and estate to the late proprietor,

who presided over it with so much benefit to the turf and to the nation. It has long since become extinct as a first-rate racing stable, and the stud dispersed all over the kingdom; but the blood of old Gohanah still runs in the veins of the most celebrated horses of the present day.

I cannot forbear relating an anecdote here of that haughty old nobleman, the Duke, though the reader may say, what has this to do with stage-coaches? But, as the incident occurred at the princely mansion I have had occasion to mention, and as the place, though not the time, comes within my early reminiscences, it will not be travelling far out of the record, as the lawyers say, to give it a place here.

The lordly owner of this splendid domain, and master of one of the finest racing studs in the kingdom, sent for Seymour,

the celebrated animal painter of that day (some of whose best productions I have been till recently possessed of, they having been given me by my father), to take portraits of his most celebrated horses, with which to adorn his gallery. The Duke entertained the artist with condescending hospitality, and, one day after dinner, filling his glass and turning to his guest, said, in a half-familiar, half-sneering manner—

“Cousin Seymour, your health.”

“I thank your grace,” said the painter, “but I have more claims to that appellation than you are aware of.”

The proud peer immediately rose from his seat and left the room. In a few minutes the steward entered, with a demand from the Duke to know from the artist the amount of his charge, which, upon stating, the steward immediately discharged, saying at the same time

there was no further necessity for his remaining at Petworth. The Duke then employed another artist of almost equal celebrity to finish what Seymour had begun, who, soon feeling the inferiority of his own talent, candidly told the Duke that no one could do this but the original artist. Upon this the Duke wrote to Seymour, inviting him to resume his professional occupation at Petworth. He replied, in a short note, "To prove I am one of your grace's blood—I shall not come."

When I took the dockyard contract, in conjunction with the person I have before spoken of, we thought it best for each to provide his moiety of the number of horses required, as we could not agree with the late contractors about the purchase of their stock; consequently, I went to the different fairs to buy whatever desirable animals might happen

to be in the market. At one of these—Rumsey—my friend and I had been together; and here an incident occurred, of a serio-ludicrous nature, which I cannot help recording. After dining at the ordinary with farmers, horsedealers, innkeepers, &c., &c., I proposed driving to Stockbridge, that is, to the stables of old John Day, grandfather of the well-known trainer of this name—the place is now, I believe, called Danesbury—as I had a horse there in training that was about to run at our garrison races.

Accordingly, we started in the evening, and, in passing through the water that crosses the road at Somborne, overtook two “gents,” whom we remembered to have seen, imbibing considerably at the White Horse, at Rumsey. They suddenly stopped to allow their horses to drink. In passing, the step of my

gig just touched the wheel of theirs, when, from the slight collision, the gent on the driving side—a very corpulent man—tumbled out, headforemost, into the little stream.

My companion said not a word, nor did I, but kept on at a good pace, which I afterwards—upon his looking round and saying they are coming at a full gallop—improved. We had just gained the top of a hill, where the declining sun shone directly on the chalk that had been excavated in the bank, when my horse suddenly threw up his head, staggered, and stopped. There was no help for it; he was taken with the meagrum.

On came this Falstaff, bursting with rage; and, in passing, shook his fist at us, and his wet, but not 'gory locks'—at which I could not help smiling, though his threatening action was accompanied with most abusive terms.

“Don’t you know who that is?” said my friend.

“Oh, yes,” said I, “I know him ; he keeps the Royal Hotel at Stockbridge, and he means mischief, I see.”

We were not then more than a mile from Stockbridge ; and, after getting out and pricking my horse in the roof of his mouth with a penknife, he recovered and we proceeded. On our entrance into Stockbridge, where the road is very wide, we perceived the gentleman in front of his house, a *possé* of ostlers and stablemen with him, standing in the middle of the road, with the evident intention of impeding our further progress.

“Stop him, Will ! take hold of his horse’s head, Harry !” vociferated the master ; for the drenching had not cooled his rage or quite drowned the effects of his potations.

Pretending surprise at such an inter-

ruption, and a total ignorance of the cause of it, I indignantly told him, calling him by name, that he had committed a breach of the law, by stopping me on the King's highway, for which I should, most certainly, call him to an account before a proper tribunal; adding, that if he had anything to say to me, and could conduct himself decently, I was going but a very little way farther—he would find me at Mr. Day's.

“Let go my horse's head, sir,” said I, addressing myself to the ostler; this the fellow instantly did, and, just touching him with the whip, we were soon under Mr. Day's hospitable roof, where I always had a hearty welcome.

We had scarcely discussed a good evening's meal, at which I always substituted malt liquor for the lighter and more polite beverage—and my excellent host's home-brewed was of the best

quality, and recommended itself strongly to my not very elevated taste—when the subject of our, or rather my, laughter came in. I saw instantly that he was another man; my coolness and self-possession had subdued him. Seeing me, too, a welcome guest at the house of his neighbour and friend, he found reason to alter his tone.

He addressed me by name, which he had learned in the interim, and said he was sorry he had stopped me; adding that had he known my name, or where I was going to, he should not have done so; but he considered himself very unhandsomely dealt with by my running against him and causing his ejection into the purling brook.

I attempted an explanation, pleading ignorance, and attributing the accident to the effects of Rumsey fair, and the excellent port of mine host of the “White

Horse." After a little further argument or altercation, our friend Day interfered, and proposed our shaking hands and drowning all animosity in a bottle of the best his cellar could afford. This was speedily put on the table, and on the angry Boniface had the desired effect.

But this comic interlude preceded a very serious afterpiece.

At one of these fairs—Stow—in the Wold in Gloucestershire, our time growing very short, I was induced to buy a mare, at rather an inferior price, of a man whom I knew to be as big a scoundrel as the fraternity could produce, but I did not at all suspect the piece of villany that had been practised on me. Arrived within nine miles of home, the mare shewed some very suspicious symptoms—so much so, that I dare not send her into the dockyard, as all horses had to pass the inspection of a man ap-

pointed by Government before they were admitted; and for my own credit's sake, I would not risk this. Had I had her destroyed at once, I should have been spared the ruin that at no distance of time overtook me. I very foolishly sent her to my own private stables, and kept her two or three days; when such unmistakable proofs of that dire disease, the glanders, manifesting themselves, that I had her killed.

Every precaution was taken, as far as cleansing, whitewashing, and fumigating the stable went, to prevent its spreading, as I well knew what a virulent, as well as what a contagious disease it was; and the summer of that year passed away without any appearance among my other horses of anything like infection. Indeed, I did not occupy this particular stall till the hunting season had commenced, and it was not till Novem-

ber that this alarming disorder reappeared.

I went to meet the Hambledon hounds upon as good a hunter as ever went into a field ; but on its coming on wet, I altered my mind, and rode to the village of Hambledon. On meeting with a farmer I knew, he asked me how it was that I was not with the hounds.

I told him I was too late ; for they had found a fox and gone away.

After looking at my horse some little time, he said, "It is a good job you were too late, for your nag has a severe cold ; see how he discharges at the nostrils."

I thought the animal had not shown his usual spirit, and, after stopping half an hour, I rode him gently home, and treated him according to the directions of the experienced hand I had met in the morning. He got no better, and in a few days alarming symptoms began to show them-

selves—so much so, that I wrote to a very noted veterinary surgeon at Salisbury. I had long known him, as he and his father had been engaged with my father in the coach business, and he had been very judiciously placed at the college in London, where he had, sometime before, passed an examination with very great credit.

He came by the mail in the morning, and, after examining the horse, pronounced his disease to be the glanders, of the most malignant description. I need not add, that the animal was led out and immediately killed—an operation that my friend most skilfully performed, by inserting his knife between, and a little behind, his ears, thereby causing almost instant death.

Thus, reader, have I been perhaps tediously explicit in relating the commencement of a malady, or I may say

plague, that ravaged my stables, and caused, in the course of a few months, the loss of 120 horses, the greater part of them young and valuable animals; and this, added to my other losses on the farm, was enough, comparatively speaking, "to break a royal merchant down." Truly might I quote from that beautiful poem some of us were taught to lisp in our childhood—

"My cattle died, and blighted was my corn."

When I look back to this sad calamity that accomplished the ruin from which I never recovered, and that altogether led to the change in my position that afterwards followed, I am led to ask, How it is that little or no advance or improvement has been made in the veterinary art? While we read of discoveries in other sciences, some of which are made patent to our senses, we find

none in Pathology, that would lead to the successful treatment of a disease, which has proved most destructive to the noblest and most useful animal in the creation, although it has excited the study and attention of first-rate practitioners, both here and on the continent, for now more than 100 years. Nay, even the seat of the disease has never been properly defined — stomach, lungs, and head, have each been pronounced as such, by different professors of this most useful art; but dissection after dissection has failed to trace the source of this bane to the animal's existence.

In the absence of all cure, then, and in despair of finding any antidote, how necessary is it to use every precaution to guard against its appearance; and this I cannot more forcibly recommend, than in the words of a distinguished

and most excellent naval officer,* whose custom it was to hang on his cabin-door, every night before retiring to rest, his own written instructions for the guidance of the officer of the watch. I need not say they varied with circumstances, and were generally written in that jocular spirit, that would be justly appreciated by officers, with whom he always lived on the best of terms:—

“All physicians, from Hippocrates and Galen, down to the learned and celebrated Dr. Eady, have decided that prevention is better than cure. Keep a d—— good look out—do!”

Lofty and well-ventilated stables, that should not be crowded, and particular attention directed to the animals' diet being sweet and wholesome; with good grooming, in which care against the horses taking cold should be included, as well as cleanliness in

* The late Admiral Sir Joseph Sidney Yorke.

all stable utensils, will mainly contribute to that desirable end, and will prevent any predisposition of the system's imbibing the germ of this insidious disorder. It sometimes commences with farcy, a disease almost as fatal. Always remember that the first loss is best, and death is the only prevention of contagion.

How frequently have I witnessed the injurious effects of a wretched and parsimonious economy, in the purchase of inferior corn. Diabetes, inflammation of the kidneys, acrid humours, general debility, and other diseases, all arising from cheap or stale oats, frequently terminate in farcy or glanders.

As an instance of the virulent, as well as dangerous nature of this disease, even to the human subject, I remember a man, employed as a knacker, inoculating himself while in the act of flaying a horse that fell a victim to it, and dying

a few days after, in the greatest agony.

I will merely subjoin, that strangles and influenza, to which all horses are subject, are frequently mistaken for this horrible disorder; there is a similarity certainly in the early stages, but ulcerated nostrils and the nauseous smell of the discharge are always decisive, and as soon as these are evident the animal should be destroyed. No one need wish his neighbour, be he friend or foe, who has anything to do with horses, a greater or more serious evil than the glanders.

The misfortunes with which I had been visited, though evils of no common occurrence, were such as all men in business are subject to, and from which some have better opportunities of recovering than others, some also can display better judgment in treating them than others: be that as it may, it pleased the Almighty about this time

to visit me with a sore and heavy affliction.

My wife had now for some time shown symptoms of a complaint, common and so fatal in this climate, that had already carried off an elder brother and sister. I have every reason to believe her death was accelerated by my reverse of fortune, but nothing, I was well assured, could arrest the enemy that had made such rapid progress in the destruction of all the organs which sustain vitality.

I shall not dwell upon this sad epoch of my life any more than to say, that after living a little more than four years in connubial felicity, I was left with two children, the younger but eighteen months old; and after my wife's remains were interred in the vault my father had built, I had ample leisure to contemplate my desolate condition.

During the period I have been writing of, a very remarkable alteration and improvement had taken place in the system of stage-coach travelling. Instead of the old heavy lumbering vehicle, with the boot fixed on the fore-axle, and a large basket on the hind, with a license to carry six inside passengers and as many as could well be crowded on the outside, after repeated steps in the forward direction, the new and elegant Telegraph coaches made their appearance. With them came a change in the quality of the animals, whether biped or quadruped, attached to them.

It is with the former I have more particularly to do. Those of the original craft, sons of men who had been long known in the old school—of whom I may speak more particularly hereafter—assumed a different style of dress; and having benefitted a little more by education than their

fathers, could assimilate themselves better to the manners and understanding of a very different grade of travellers—while the great improvement in the pace and sort of animal required, rendered the situation of the “dragsman,” as he was now termed, one of enviable delight.

Consequently men of a far different class aspired to it. Yeomen left tilling their farms—military men forsook their profession—even clergymen their pulpits, to enter upon this pleasing vocation.*

These alterations and improvements began first of all on the Bath and Oxford roads. It was a little before this time that driving four-in-hand became a fashionable amusement among the more wealthy residents of the

* Some of my readers may remember the handsome military officer, Captain Proben, who officiated on the Reading coach (not Williams') for many years, who has since inherited considerable property in Gloucestershire; as they will the poor Parson Dennis, who exchanged his vicarage in Berkshire for the box of the White Hart, Bath, but finished his career on the Norwich road.

latter city and university. Studying the rudiments of the art in a school where every facility was rendered for acquiring proficiency, and associating with some of its most respectable professors, they soon became *connoisseurs*, as well as amateurs, and, increasing in numbers, finally resolved themselves into a club or institution, called the B.D.C., or Bedford Driving Club, but lately extinct; after which, by a handsome donation of a hundred guineas, they founded another B.D.C., or Benevolent Driving Club, which has also been defunct some little time. Both tended very much to the advantage, and also to the respectability, of their more humble tutors in the art, and their successors.

About this time, and out of this institution, sprang up another, termed the "Bang Up," in accordance with the slang then much in vogue, and it reckoned among its numbers some

of the most distinguished and wealthy members of the aristocracy of the day. Cavendish Square was their place of rendezvous; and here on a Sunday afternoon might be seen assembled from twenty to thirty of the most splendid turns-out that money could buy or judgment could select.

After some little time spent in putting to and adjusting bearing reins, coupling-reins, &c., they would mount and drive in procession into and round Hyde Park, eliciting the surprise and admiration of the gaping multitude, which consisted of all classes and both sexes, some of whom passed judgment upon the merits of the different teams—their shape, make, colour, and action; others equally criticised the attitude, skill, or execution, of each particular performer; while all rejoiced at so splendid an exhibition of an enjoyment purely national.

The subjoined song, which I since

penned in my idle moments, and once had the honour of singing before a crowded audience, will give some idea of what the four-in-hand was :—

SONG.

(Tune, the " Trotting Horse.")

I DRIVE the four best spicy prads of any out of town ;
Well matched for size and colour too, and where's the man
to frown ?

Their heads all up, they step along, at such a splendid rate,
The pride of all the gazing throng, the envy of the great.
When I push along, dash along, there's none so good as they,
All England can't produce their match, I'll bet you, play
or pay.

Near thorough-bred, their action's like four rowers in a boat,
So true their step, so fast their pace, so shining every coat ;
A pack-thread string will hold them all, so temperate and
kind ;

And if you only drop your hand, why they'll outstrip the
wind. As I push along, &c.

Dark chestnuts of the rarest stamp, their like was never seen ;
All young and sound, from mane to tail no blemishes between ;
Their harness neat, and polished bright ; and then the
varmint drag,

Who would not boast of such a team, of such a turn-out brag ?
When I push along, &c.

Now, when all the swells, on Darby-day, to Epsom hurry
down,

And vie in every style of drag, who most can come it brown ;

No sooner on the crowded Downs, with elbows squar'd, I stop,
Than nobs, professors, come around, and on their fortune drop.

When they see me push along, &c.

Returning with our skins well lined, and chaffing's all the go,
Dukes, lords, and squires, to pass the throng try everything
they know.

Apollo's son was ne'er so proud, nor half so pleased as I,
When, dashing past a host of things, I say, " My lord, good-
bye." As I push along, &c.

Now, if the railroads, that vile foe, t' our sport should put an
end,

And England's pride, the four-in-hand, no longer have a
friend,

To some lone cot I will retire, and dream upon the past,
And live again on what was once the fastest of the fast.

When I used to push along, &c.

But with all this, to me there was
something wanting to finish or fill up the
picture. Although the four horses were
shown off to the best advantage that skill
and judgment could produce, joined to
minute attention to the appointments of
both carriage and harness, still there was
a nakedness about the whole affair, when
contrasted with that more humble, at
the same time more useful, candidate for

public favour—a stage-coach—they were striving their utmost to imitate. Indeed, there was something absurd in my eye in a nobleman or gentleman sitting alone on his box, behind a splendid team that required little or no driving, with no companions to share his pleasure, envy his position, or admire his skill:—and whose expensive equipage would seem to an indifferent observer, devoted only to the enjoyment of two or more flunkies, seated on the hinder part of the vehicle, with folded arms, surveying the beauties of the surrounding country, through which their master was conveying them so kindly, and in such a magnificent style.

It is not intended by these observations to detract from the merits, the beauty, or the utility, of the accomplishment of driving four horses well, or to deny the necessity of practice in order

to become a master of this manly and national art, but to show how the want of companionship would deprive the solitary votary of Jehu of half his pleasure. Compare this with the well-appointed, well-loaded stage-coach ; admire, as you may, the splendid turn-out of a noble Marquis,* who had issued with his four iron-greys from the gates of Strathfieldsey—the seat of his illustrious relative, the iron Duke—for an hour's drive, and had just pulled up at the “White Hart,” at Hook ; and then see come rattling along, at ten or twelve miles an hour, the “Southampton Telegraph,” with four “spicy prads,” not to be matched in colour, not going at any measured pace, but all well in hand, with their heads up, slashing along under the skilful management of the then celebrated John Peer, who sits

* The late Duke of Beaufort, then Marquis of Worcester.

at his ease conversing with his box companion, or turning his head to answer some query of a passenger on the roof, with whom his titled compeer intended to have a minute's chat that morning. But no—the “Independent” is close at his hind boot, and John can only acknowledge his lordship's condescension by a slight but well-timed obeisance in passing. Compare the two, I say, and then judge if the eye would not cease to be captivated by the vacant splendour of the nobleman's equipage, and follow to its utmost ken those two rival (one almost matchless) and admirable specimens of this useful, elegant, attractive, but now almost obsolete art.

Before I leave this part of my subject it will not be deemed irrelevant to say a little more of the unsightly machine that but few of my readers can remember, as it was just going out at the time

I commenced life ; therefore would they scarcely recognize the purpose for which it was intended, or believe that this rude invention of our fathers was made use of for plundering the simple and unwary.

The improvidence and recklessness of our seamen, as regarded their hard-earned pecuniary remuneration, is well known—for these have not quite passed away ; neither are we likely to forget the swarms of Jews and infidels of both sexes constantly lying in wait to pounce upon the unsuspecting sons of Neptune, to ease them of the light but seductive burden they had been supplied with, after years of toil in a distant and sultry climate.

It would naturally be supposed that, after running the gauntlet of our seaport towns, they would be safe from any further depredations. Not so—as the following anecdote will show:—

Many years after I left the place of my prosperity, while on my last *stage*, business or pleasure called me down to my native county, and on my return I got on the box of the Godalming coach. In the coachman I recognized a very old servant of my father's. After expressing, not in the politest terms, his pleasure at seeing me again, he began conversing on the hardness of the times, comparing them with days of old.

"Them was the times, when I drove the old Blue for your father out of Portsmouth. Why, I have got more money in one night than, I fancies, you does in six months."

"Why, how was that?" said I. "I always understood that sailors never gave anything to coachman or guard."

"Give anything? We didn't give 'em a chance."

"Why, how did you manage, then?"

“We used to set 'em a-fighting in the rumble-tumble, when they'd be sure to drop something worth picking up. Some of 'em would carry their blunt in their hats; and one night there was a fellow had got ninety pounds, all notes, tied up in a roll; and old Bob Chandler was guard of the old Night-coach, and give me the office, when we pulled up together at the Hammer Ponds. Going over Rodborough Bob contrived to knock the fellow's hat off, when I got down and picked it up; and on our arrival at London old Bob and I went snacks. There's no such times as them now.”

I could but stare with indignation at this fellow's villany and shameless audacity.

I add a further proof of the facility there was in imposing on these simple-minded people.

The Portsmouth Night-coaches changed

coachmen at Godalming, in Surrey — the mail at Mousehill, a village two miles nearer Portsmouth ; consequently, there were two of the fraternity every day at each place, with their time totally unemployed. On one occasion the two from Godalming walked over to Mousehill, as was their custom in fine weather, to play a game of skittles with their brethren, or otherwise amuse themselves. On their reaching the "White Horse," they observed the day-coach about to pull up, laden with sailors on the outside.

"I'll bet you a beefsteak for the four," said one to the other, "that I will draw one of these sailors of a pound."

"A done," said the other, who was a much younger hand than his friend.

The coach stopped, and the coachman dismounted and went into the bar.

"Give me your way-bill, coachman," said the one who had made the bet, at

the same time giving him the wink. Then, addressing the first sailor who had entered the house—"Holloa, you sir! you have not paid your fare!"

The poor fellow replied, with an oath, that he had.

"What's your name?"

"John Scott."

"I don't see that name," said he, looking over the way-bill. "You must pay, or you can't go any farther."

"How much is it, then?" said Jack.

"One pound."

"Take it, and be d——!" the man exclaimed, as he threw down the note, which the other pocketed, and thereby won his bet.

That fact accomplished, the money was returned; for though of the old school, W. Bishop was not the man to participate in such vile practices; and I have recorded it only to show how easily sailors

could be duped, as well as to show how these poor fellows were rewarded when returning to the country which their undaunted bravery and unwearied toil had preserved.

The means practised by crimps and touts were in a far more wholesale way; for they would not only take the money of the sailors, but take care that many of them should never see the coach, which leaving with half the complement they had booked, would find a lot more waiting, in charge of these worthies, at a house two or three miles on the road, and they, rather than not go, would clamber up, after having been induced to reward their kind offices, in thus procuring them a passage, with more than double fare.

With these improvements, then, in the style of both man and cattle, constantly passing before my eyes on the one hand, and the threats of poverty assailing me on

the other, I began to consider seriously of the propriety—indeed, of the necessity—of adapting myself, my inclinations, as well as my circumstances, to the times.

The serious losses I had sustained had already compelled me to dispose of the greater part of my coaching business; and the dockyard contract, which had turned out a good paying concern, but, requiring daily attention, I was also obliged to make over to my partner, for which I received a small premium. I still occupied my farm—but this did not sufficiently occupy my time; and now, having but one coach left of my extensive establishment, I thought I could not do better than save myself the expense of a coachman, and reap the rewards the box afforded. Besides, from the domestic affliction I was labouring under, I wanted something to fix my attention, and to diversify my thoughts; and my undertak-

ing to drive my own coach offered the best — indeed the only — means within reach of supplying the deficiency—as stated hours of employment would do the one, while the daily change and variety of company would induce the other.

It was on the Portsmouth road, then, that I first made my *debût* in the character I have assumed in my title-page; and although I did not remain there long, for reasons which I shall presently relate, I continued my career in the profession with but little intermission until railroads put a stop to it altogether.

CHAPTER III.

THE PORTSMOUTH ROCKET.

Ambition—the Beetle—Loss of Caste—The Brighton Road
 —Box Companions—A Naval Hero—Sporting Colonel
 —R. B. Sheridan—New Friends—A Race—The Result
 —Fog—Singular Appearance—Talkative Companion—
 A Spill—Scene in the Bere Forest—Unrewarded Friends
 —Experience—An Exeat.

WHATEVER the philosopher may imply, or however the cynic may deride, it must be conceded that ambition forms part of our existence; it is wound up in all our thoughts, words, and actions, and is as much the moving power of those engaged in commercial pursuits, of whatever grade,

as it is of either of the liberal professions.

It would be a difficult matter to decide whether to place it in the category of our virtues or our vices, for it is an allurements both to the good and the bad, of every age and nation. It is a deity that is worshipped alike by the warrior and the priest—the statesman and the poet—the lawyer and the doctor, in the higher sphere—the mechanic and the merchant—the industrious and the idle—the honest man and the thief, in the lower.

All sacrifice at its shrine, all are eager alike to mount its ladder, and all are subject by a false step to fall “e’en from its topmost round.” In vain, then, has our great bard said,

“Cromwell, I charge thee, fling away ambition!”

It was ambition that made that *quondam* butcher’s boy, into whose mouth the poet put these words, a priest and a

statesman, and by his talents and intrigues a ruler of sovereigns.

It was ambition, instigated by religious zeal, whether real or assumed, aided by the most consummate art, that subsequently enabled a private gentleman of Huntingdon to obtain supreme power, to subvert an ancient dynasty, and to govern by his own strong head and arm.

It was ambition made a Corsican advocate's son an Emperor, and the scourge and curse of Europe. It is ambition that makes literary aspirants cabinet ministers. Ambition makes a clever mechanic a millionaire — an industrious journeyman a wealthy and prosperous master. Ambition also makes members of parliament of fortunate speculators and successful adventurers—and gentlemen of swindlers; and maybe 'twas ambition, "though not the true one," that made coachmen of gentlemen and nobles.

It was then the ambition of the humble individual now inditing these pages to become a great coach proprietor. From his father's position at the head of one of the largest establishments in London, he had an opportunity of contemplating the importance, the status it gave a man in society; and comported himself accordingly, to acquire a knowledge of its relative duties and advantages.

It will be recollected, but by few I fear, of my readers, that the coaching world was comprised in a circle, and that each large establishment was a little kingdom of itself—that each particular road was a territory that perhaps jointly, perhaps solely, the right from long usage of this or that establishment, and any infringement of such right was considered an offence, and immediately met with retaliation.

The general result was open and declared hostilities, in the shape of oppo-

sition coaches, going at a more rapid pace and at reduced fares, terminating frequently in the ruin of one or both parties.

It will not then be difficult to divine that it required a good general, that is, a man with a good capacity, of keen judgment, and, what is more, of considerable caution, to preside over such an establishment; for he had to seek and secure alliances among the different country proprietors, and to hold it in his power to reward the allegiance of one, or punish the delinquency of another—all of which involved tact, penetration, and forethought.

For want of these my poor father fell, and, in his fall, crushed the rising aspirations of his more ambitious son, and blotted them out for ever. It would be worse than a foolish vanity to compare this with the fall of those brilliant stars of greater or less magnitude, whose

careers are emblazoned in the pages of history; but the effects on the individual are the same, as is so truly depicted in the lines emanating from a spirit that could so justly appreciate the beatings of the human heart, in the lowest as well as in the highest condition:—

“And the poor beetle that we tread upon,
In corporal sufferance feels a pang as great
As when a giant dies.”

I must claim the reader's indulgence for thus expatiating upon the change of my circumstances; but such reflections form the necessary connection between my previous and then present position, and the feelings they gave rise to are brought more forcibly to my mind by the scenes I daily see around me.

Many were the opinions passed among my own acquaintances and friends, as well as the public generally, upon the step I had taken, which was lauded by

some, condemned by others, and excused by all, who best knew the real cause of my entering upon so formidable an engagement—formidable in the responsibility of having so many of His Majesty's lieges daily entrusted to my care.

In my own estimation, I felt that I had lost caste, but for this I hoped the novelty of my new way of life would impart compensation; and as driving was daily becoming more fashionable among the higher class, I foolishly thought I was only following in the wake of others far above myself in rank and station, and should, therefore, have them to share my degradation.

It would not be possible to enumerate all, nor would it be necessary to name any of those men of rank and title who forgot their birth, and what was due to their connections and position in society, to figure in the capacity of dragsmen.

The Brighton road was the chief *locale* for these distinguished ornaments of the profession, and of printsellers' shops. They have passed away—their occupation has become void ; and the swift torrent of the rail has swept them from the public view. Some returned to their patrimonial estates, and exercised the office of magistrates in their own district, after having subjected themselves to a similar tribunal in others ; some finished their career before the devouring flood arrived ; and one in particular—Stephenson, Esq.—who, from necessity, made the profession his choice, after being at the University, and who, amidst all the profaneness of the calling, preserved the character of a gentleman, was cut short by the hand of death. But the Brighton “Age” still lives in the memory of his friends, and is transmitted to posterity by the pencil of Herring.

It was at the latter end of the summer

of 1816 that I commenced my new vocation. The coach which left every morning at nine o'clock I horsed myself half-way to London, where, at the "White Lion," at Mousehill, a village about two miles south of Godalming, I met the down coach, and, after partaking of some refreshment, each driver turned back. My time of arrival at Portsmouth was seven o'clock in the evening—so that the hours were about the best that could be chosen; and, consequently, as the roads were very good, though rough, the work was light.

To make use of an old simile, like a child with a new toy, I was pleased for a while. There is something—but what it is I never could discover—that induces your companion on the box—should you have one—to enter into conversation; and that not always upon general subjects, but upon something ap-

pertaining to his own profession, or his family, his birthplace, or a scene in which he himself has played a prominent part. He will describe a law-suit, a speech in parliament, his introduction at Court, his first appearance at the fives-court, the management of his tenants, his travels abroad, or the number of his pheasants.

Such topics would at once announce to you that your companion was an aristocrat of the highest order, and you would listen with profound attention to the many wonders he was condescending to unfold to you. But there were persons of all grades, whose profession and station in life you could readily ascertain from their conversation.

It is said of Sheridan, the great wit, orator, poet, and playwright, that he once made a bet with one of those exalted members of the senate with whom he

then frequently associated, that he would tell any man's calling, however much a stranger he might be, by his conversation, when and wherever he came in contact with him.

The wager was closed, and he met the individual selected to be the object of his experiment at a grand dinner-party. The cloth was cleared, and the company, consisting of the greatest wits of the day, were eager to witness the skill and penetration of their friend. The conversation became general, and the stranger acquitted himself like a man of rank and fashion, seemingly possessed of every accomplishment ; every topic he discussed with apparent ease and eloquence—so much so, that the wit, who had tried every means that the shrewdest intellect could devise to extract the kernel from the shell, found himself beat at his own weapons.

As the morning advanced, all his efforts became fruitless, and he was about to give up in despair, and acknowledge having lost his wager, when the stranger, who had been made acquainted with the secret of his being invited to meet this man of acute penetration, rose to take leave of the company. He observed that he could but testify to the pleasure he had experienced in the company and conversation of so distinguished a man as Mr. Sheridan, and should be most happy to continue an acquaintance so pleasantly began.

"I have," he added, "a pretty little spot on the skirts of the town—"

"Where, sir?—the *skirts* of the town?" cried the wit, in a tone of exultation.

"A tailor, a tailor, I'll be sworn!"

The truth of the guess was admitted, and the wager won.

I must confess myself to have been very much entertained at times with this sort of conversation, which would lay open family secrets, intended family alliances, friendships, *liaisons*, disagreements and disputes in very high quarters—in one of which I remember the character of a cabinet minister, or his brother, was very seriously attacked. Such gossip, I say, amused me, and through a long career has been chiefly instrumental in rendering tolerable the daily drudgery of the employment, by relieving its monotony.

The only two companions of the former description I was honoured with during the short time I performed on that stage, that I can recollect, was the hero of Navarino,* but then just returned to England in command of the “Blake,” 74, in consequence of his promotion;

* Vice-Admiral Sir William Codrington, Bart.

and his very fine appearance, and manners, and conversation, at once convinced me that I was in company with a first-rate specimen of humanity.

The other joined me at Petersfield one morning, coming from Up Park, the magnificent seat of Sir Harry Featherstonehaugh, Bart., about three miles distant, and was then, or had been, in command of a crack regiment of Hussars. I remembered having seen him at the dinner given by the officers to their illustrious colonel.

He was a tall, long-legged man, and had a brace of greyhounds with him. Our conversation ran principally upon the merits of that portion of the family of the canine species, with which he was thoroughly acquainted; nevertheless, it did not require the eye or ear of a Sheridan to perceive, that his time had not been devoted wholly to hunting and

shooting, or that his associations were even of the very highest order; altogether, he might be set down as a fair specimen of the followers of the court of the Regent.*

It is not my province to pass judgment upon persons I met, as it were by accident; but it was my fortune to fall in company with many distinguished individuals, and it was my inclination, also, to know something of them. I am thus able to pass in review a great number of characters, who have rendered themselves more or less conspicuous on the world's wide stage.

After having made choice of my avocation it naturally followed that I should, now and then, mix in company with some of its long-standing professors, nay, it was impossible to avoid, as it were, becoming one of them; but, as I had

* Colonel Leigh.

known most of them before, it was a matter of some little difficulty, and it required some little tact to lower myself to their level, that is, to render it consonant to my feelings—to which in truth they were quite indifferent, with the exception of one or two, who never lessened in their respectful conduct towards me.

There were two other day-coaches on the road, but as they left Portsmouth at different hours, there was no fear of our coming in contact. With the down coaches it was different, as from their leaving London by different routes, and other circumstances of stopping or not stopping to dine, would sometimes in the middle of the journey throw us together.

It happened on one occasion, that on my return I overtook the other day-coaches at the "Anchor," at Liphook,

a house I have before spoken of, where they changed horses and dined.

I stopped to leave a passenger or parcel, when, as the drivers were sitting with a bottle of wine before them, one of them asked me if I would take a glass; I assented, and the bottle was soon emptied. I called for another, which was as quickly despatched, but they would not suffer me to pay for it. While hurriedly tossing off the last glass, one of my companions asked me what time I intended to get to Portsmouth that evening, at the same time I observed he gave his companion a wink. Having answered, much about the usual time, I left. They too were then ready to start, and as I had to change horses about half a mile further down the village, I drove off. While I was changing, both passed at a swinging pace, looking round and

smiling, as much as to say, as I thought, "Come along." Nothing loth, I mounted, and taking hold of four, all nearly thorough-bred tits, I was soon after them.

Now, the road from Liphook to Petersfield, to speak plainly, is all up and down-hill, the two steepest being at the end of the stage, and at that time it was extremely hard and rough. After ascending the first rise, I saw my two opponents, one a little in advance of the other, full a mile distant, seemingly going very fast. I put my little thorough-bred ones into a gallop, and as the road narrowed in places, I had to mark in my mind where I could or should pass them.

The first, the "Regulator," I overtook going up the hill out of the village of Rake, and passed him with the greatest ease; and the other, the "Hero," I could

descry full half a mile before me. I knew very well I had the best team. I therefore followed at full speed. Being light loaded, the deflection of the springs corresponding with the unevenness of the road, the only passenger I had behind, a soldier, was tossed up and down like a shuttlecock from a battledore; so much was this the case, that I kept continually looking back to see if he were safe.

At the top of Sheet Hill I overhauled my competitor, as the sailor would say, and we went down the hill broadside and broadside. When nearly at the bottom we met a postchaise, whose driver, staring with astonishment, pulled into the bank, to let us pass.

A turnpike being just ahead I pulled in, or I do not know what might have been the consequence—but knowing my rival must be nearly beat, I marked the

spot on the opposite hill where, as I thought, I could easily pass him. I did not know, though I might have known, the nature of the man I had to deal with.

Upon rising the hill my leaders were again at his forewheel, when the only inside passenger he had put his head out, and in a most angry tone, gesticulating violently at the same time, said :—

“If I had a pistol, sir, I would shoot you!”

“Put your b—— old head in, do!” said his coachman, and immediately pulled his horses right across my leaders’ heads, driving them up a steep bank, into which the off fore-wheel stuck.

Luckily no strap, or trace, or buckle was broken or displaced, but the delay necessary to put the leaders straight, though short, was enough to allow me

only to reach his hind boot when he pulled up at Petersfield. And thus ended our eight-mile course, which was accomplished—by the watch of my box-companion, who enjoyed the sport beyond anything—in a few seconds over twenty minutes.

Although my horses were none the worse for the race, they being light, spicy well-bred animals, fit for that stage, and that stage only, three of my opponent's four never came out of the stable again. He* was a most powerful man, as well as a very superior workman, but of such a temper, that I believe—indeed he afterwards so acknowledged—he would have risked his own life as well as the passengers' before he would have let me pass him.

The result of this, my first attempt at

* This poor man, whose name was Abraham Titmuss, was killed not long after this by the axle-tree breaking.

fast driving, did not redound much to my advantage. The town of Petersfield was up in arms against the rash and inexperienced young man who could so endanger the lives of his passengers; and as my father had lived among them many years, the principal gentleman or magistrate thought proper to write to him on the subject.

The proprietor of the "Anchor," at Liphook, too, who had suffered most severely from this spirited contest, wrote to him a long letter of complaint. The consequence was, I had a business-like but parental admonition, which did not tend to make me further in love with the profession I had adopted, or to render me more inclined to support the gibes and taunts of my old associates.

However this, like most other occurrences of a similar nature, was, in the course of a short time, remembered only

as an extraordinary feat, and things went on pretty well till the middle or latter end of January. It was a rime frost, accompanied, or followed, by one of those thick and lasting fogs so common in this climate. I was on my return, and had for my companion on the box a man I had long known, as an old inhabitant of Portsmouth; he was a respectable tradesman in the town—a boot and shoemaker—but better known as a man whose extraordinary volubility would not unfrequently rush, uncurbed, into the regions of fiction.

The display of this very agreeable gift or acquirement had not been at all lessened by the small potations he had imbibed on his way from London; for it was extremely cold.

We left Mousehill without any appearance of the fog dispersing; and on our reaching the top of Hindhead, the scene

was most singular and peculiarly romantic. We seemed to be on an elevation in a small island looking down upon the sea : the sky above us was beautiful and clear, without a cloud to blot or to destroy the serenely blue concave ; while the trees that reared their heads above the edge of the Bowl were adorned with icicles that hung down like crystals projecting from a rock, with equal grace and brilliancy. It was not long before we were again in this immaterial ocean, and, after sipping a little to arm us against the cold when we changed, we quitted Horndean, and entered the Bere Forest. As the evening advanced, the fog increased, and my friend's volubility by no means decreased.

At an unfortunate moment, when he had distracted my attention by his unceasing tongue, I found the coach a little off its equilibrium on my side. To restore

it, I whipped the off-wheel horse, when a noise like the report of a cannon, and I on my back, made me aware of the consequences of inattention.

I was on my legs in an instant, and soon sufficiently recovered my senses to ascertain that I was unhurt and near the spot where, but a few years before, I had had a narrow escape with my life on the runaway mare.

There were four young ladies inside, all of one party, who were soundly asleep when the accident occurred, and they innocently asked what had happened.

After extricating them, and disentangling the team, I left three of them in charge of my valuable and voluble fellow-traveller, who had, like myself, received little or no injury, and mounting the other horse galloped to the residence of my brother-in-law, about a mile and a half distance, to obtain assistance. This

was immediately granted, in the shape of three or four stout labourers and a strong cart-rope, but on our return to the scene of my misadventure I found the coach upon her legs and in the road, the ladies again in the inside, and only waiting for me to put to, and proceed on the journey.

In this part of the forest was a plain or large dale, that afforded scope and shelter to a number of those wandering people whose virtues are the theme of some of our first writers of fiction, though in real life these are exhibited chiefly in the hen-roosts and dovecotes of the neighbouring farmers. Hence the quick and workman-like manner in which all things had been put right. After thanking the motley group of males and females, children and adults, I proceeded on my journey safely to the end, arriving a little less than an hour beyond the usual time,

Ruminating on the accident, our harmless escape, and the ready assistance we had received, it struck me that I had neglected to reward the good people who had so promptly and so efficiently put forth their exertions in my behoof; but in going to unload the hind-boot, I found that I need be under no uneasiness on that score, as, anticipating my forgetfulness in the hurry of departure, they had rewarded themselves with two or three baskets of game that I had taken up at Liphook, deeming pheasants and hares a greater treat to them, than to the people to whom they were addressed, or their friend, the owner of Hollycombe; and even for this I had to be thankful, for had they made choice of one or two of the ladies' trunks for a reward, I should have had much more trouble in restoring them, or finding an

equivalent, than I had in paying Mr., afterwards Sir C. Taylor, for his game.

It was a maxim of one of the oldest London proprietors,* never to employ a man who had not had, at one time or another, an overturn—for this plain reason, not having such experience he would not know how to get a coach up again; I, although not possessing this valuable knowledge, could now take credit for it.

This, without creating any very great cry to my disadvantage in the town—for the fog and the darkness of the night were extenuating circumstances—called forth the strong remonstrances of my father, who was still the London proprietor; and elicited, at the same time, the dislike my family had to my remaining in such a situation.

But, however, this, like the other little

* Mr. Roberts, of the "White Horse," Fetter Lane.

faux pas, was soon forgotten. In the meantime, I began to grow weary of my occupation. The coach, like all others not now supported by the war, loaded light during the winter months; the passengers some above, some below, generally offered me the gratuity, and I was not sufficiently initiated to ask for it.

My landlord offered to relieve me from the lease of the farm, knowing full well that the capital I had expended would soon invite another tenant. Not being enabled to indulge in my former amusements, without neglecting my daily business, I resolved to leave the neighbourhood; therefore making both the farm and the stock of horses, harness, &c., over to my father, I bid a long farewell to my native county, resolved to seek in the metropolis employment on some road where I was not

known, to await the chance of some incident likely to restore me to my lost position—a very vain and foolish expectation.

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CHAPTER IV.

THE CROWN PRINCE.

Amor Patriæ—Domestic Arrangement—Emery—A Revolution—Education—A Swell Dragsman—Contrast—Leamington—A Proposition—Warwick Castle—Stoneleigh Abbey and Kenilworth—An Agreeable Surprise—A New Start—Idle Hours—A Country Walk—Gorhambury—A Pleasing Adventure—Sir Harbottle Grimstone and Lord Bacon again—Reflections and a Refection—An Invitation—The Consequences—A Scene at South Mimms.

IF there be one feeling more common to our kind than another, it is that of attachment to one's native place; and leaving it generally creates regret. This applies, perhaps, as well to individuals and

families as to nations; though among the latter it is more remarkable, inasmuch as it is strongly developed in the uncivilized portions of our fellow-creatures. History and experience teaches us this.

The Esquimaux cannot be prevailed on to quit the desolation of his frozen regions; the Negro sighs for a return to the pestiferous vapours of his tropical clime; and the Bedouin exults in the deadly blast of his arid desert. The more polished members of the human family, who boast of a superior knowledge of the great Author of the Universe, and profess, if they do not practise, doctrines deduced from His revealed will, have long enjoyed the benefits of a social and commercial intercourse with each other, and have found a home in every clime, even in the most distant parts of the globe; yet with all the advantages their moral condition and physical con-

stitution give them, whether luxuriating in the voluptuous pleasures of the east, or penetrating with indomitable courage and perseverance the recesses of savage nature in the west, — also cherish a vivid remembrance of the home of their fathers, and a proud regard, if not a latent hope for, a return to it.

Now, it is no affectation to say, that it was with some such feeling as this I left my native county. It is true, I was but little removed from it; but as for again enjoying the society to which I had been accustomed, or indulging in the pleasures her beautiful hills and dales afforded me, I might as well have been in the Bush in Australia—for even there my thoughts could only revert, as here they have never ceased to do, to times and scenes of the past.

As my father still retained one of the minor establishments in London, and had

a residence there, I made it my home. My mother I found in declining health, and principally for her benefit, my father proposed taking a house at Leamington, in Warwickshire, vainly hoping to stay the progress, or alleviate the agony, of a disorder, the cure of which was impossible.

As the only coach to this place, celebrated for its mineral waters, and the beauty of the surrounding country, was from our yard, at my father's desire I went down, and of course became acquainted with the proprietors on the road, and those of the fraternity who figured on the box.

I had not, as yet, acquired sufficient knowledge of the moral merits of any individual engaged here in the Coaching business—for this plain reason, I had not associated with them long enough. In my own locality, and in my father's establishment, I had hitherto known them

only as servants or inferiors, and therefore could know but little of their habits or character when off the box.

It is true, I had heard of one or two, who had visited the antipodes on Government business (*loike*), as Emery used to say, in the character of *Tyke*, in the "School of Reform"; but this might have happened from a misconstruction of the law of *meum* and *tuum*, to which all were liable; or, at any rate, from the different interpretation given to it by master and man. The causes of such a distinction I therefore simply thought, could not apply to any of those noted practitioners whose company was sought, and dress and manners imitated, by gentles and nobles, and who indeed appeared to me to be as much beyond such vulgar imputations as their employers.

As I am now about to speak of some of the members of the fraternity, it will

not be considered out of place if I here give a slight sketch, or general outline, of this sect of the community as it at that time existed—a time of transition, be it remembered, from the old school to the new; from the votaries of gin and beer—from those who delighted in the *purly* dewes of the morning—to those who basked in the noonday sunshine of Sherry or Moselle; from the old box-coat, with its hundred capes, slouched hat, and huge bare chapped hands, to the cape and Mackintosh, nobby tile, and white gloves.

I have in a former chapter given an account of the peculiar sort of depredations committed on the poor sailors, with which I was afterwards made acquainted; these, though no doubt common, were confined to one or two particular roads.

But the old school had passed away with the clumsy vehicles, and coarse and

vulgar members of the cloth, fit only for an ignorant generation; and another and more accomplished race of men had sprung up, with the improved or new-invented carriages, faster pace, and better accommodation, that the changed circumstances of the nation, from war to peace, and the consequent improvement in trade, manufacture, and commerce, had put in requisition.

In most parts of the country, and on roads of 100 miles and more in extent, which led principally to manufacturing towns and districts, innkeepers were the principal proprietors; and the employment falling mostly in the night, the drivers were generally selected from their own stable-yards; and it was considered a promotion to put a postilion on the mail, who was afterwards advanced to one or other of the coaches on the same line of road.

Not so with Brighton, Oxford, and other towns at the distance of 50 miles or so from the metropolis. Here a more dashing professor was sought, to give a more attractive appearance to the whole turn-out; and to those places, men who had gained some little notoriety, by their superior skill and strong nerve, resorted for employment. At this period, and for some time before, the whole business in the last-named place had been in the hands of one man, who had inherited it from his father or uncle; and, under the masterly superintendence of Richard Costar, Esq., Oxford set an example to the whole kingdom, and acquired a celebrity for the advance it had made in the general improvement of public conveyances.

In this school, and under this gentleman's fostering protection, some of these men had thrived, and after-

wards showed their gratitude by leaving his service, and becoming the principal instigators of a competition, — opposition it may more properly be termed,—which gained them a celebrity many of the more youthful professors were anxious to acquire. These men, and such as these, were sought by the London proprietors when they started any new coach, whether in opposition, or to some newly-discovered fashionable watering-place.

About this time, too, a sort of flash language, called slang, was very much in use, and it was considered almost a necessary accomplishment, and a recommendation for employment on the box, although the candidates had picked it up in the purlieus of St. Giles's, and among associates who were now and then unwilling pleaders at the bar of the Old Bailey. It was not then thought necessary to know anything of the moral condition of the

man—whether he were the husband of one wife, or lived in the grossest immorality. A good outward appearance, plenty of confidence, and a notoriety, it mattered not by what means, or at whose expense, acquired, were qualifications sufficient to obtain employment in the first establishments in London ; whereas the same qualifications might, and did, cover others that should have conducted their possessors to the penal settlements. But it will not do to look too narrowly into the characters of our public men, in whatever sphere they may be placed, or the country would lose the services of many able denizens.

Notwithstanding this, there were coachmen whose aspirations did not lead them to so lofty a pitch of celebrity, and who were content to live in the approbation of their employers and in the general esteem of their fellows.

Now, upon the coach that went to Leamington, or rather through Leamington and Warwick to Birmingham, and which had been denominated the "Crown Prince," in honour, I suppose, of the French heir to the throne of Sweden, there were four men employed—one at each end, and two in the intermediate ground; and two out of the four were good specimens, though from an opposite view, of the description I have given.

The man who officiated out of London was one of those flash gentlemen who possessed all the characteristics (and would, from his appearance, at the present day, be pointed out), as one of the members of the swell-mob: indeed, that might have been his principal avocation, and this only a subordinate one, for he assumed to be acquainted with every thief in London. His stature was short, and his head protruded from his rounded

shoulders like a wen ; the contour of his countenance was something akin to a hawk ; his eye indicative of a prowling, knavish disposition ; and his whole expression was not unlike that inimitable representation of *Ancient Pistol* by little Simmons, as he was called. His manners were coarse, his speech vulgar, and his conversation of the worst and lowest description. His knowledge did not seem to extend beyond the prize-ring, and his principal patrons consisted of those unfortunate scions of the aristocracy, who, not from choice, took up their residence, for a time, within certain prescribed limits in the immediate neighbourhood of the Fleet Prison, allotted them by the law. I was not a little surprised to find this man an especial favourite with the innkeepers and proprietors on the road, and was fain to attribute the dislike I had to the man to prejudice, or want of

knowledge of what should constitute a respectable and desirable servant. Indeed, his natural bearing, made up of impudence, ignorance, and swagger, would convey an impression to the unthinking that he was a person of considerable importance.

Passing over the next, who was, or had been, a gentleman's coachman, or flunkie, and had acquired his position, as our younger sons of nobility and others do in the army, by purchase; I come to the third, whom I found to come a little nearer to what I had pictured to myself ought to be the conductor of a public conveyance, loaded with visitors to a fashionable watering-place. As the up and down coaches met midway, and the men exchanged seats and way-bills, the other man had told him who I was, consequently there needed no introduction.

He was a fine, tall, good-looking young man, and an excellent workman. The day was fine, the company all of the better sort, and in conversation with those on the roof, he seemed quite at his ease. We dined together at Southam, and, after discussing a bottle of port, soon became on familiar terms.

Arriving at Leamington, he pulled up and put me down at the "Royal," and, his day's work terminating at Warwick, but two miles farther, he said that he would return and spend the evening with me. With this I was much pleased, as my father had not yet moved the family down, and I was quite a stranger.

In the meantime, I walked over this new town, that had sprung up like a mushroom. My father had told me that the house I should alight at was, in his time, the only house in the village; and that, upon one occasion, he and his partner,

when he first had possession of the large establishment in London he had lately left, stopped there on their way from Shrewsbury, where they had been to establish a new coach, and, having to remain all night, they drank all the wine and spirits the landlord had in his house—a proof of the former insignificance of the now flourishing town of Leamington, with its sixteen thousand inhabitants; a contrast that a paltry pot-house afforded, with some of the most splendid hotels in the kingdom.

My friend soon returned, and, in company with the host, a merry, facetious, at the same time most hospitable little man, whose society I enjoyed many times afterwards, I spent a very agreeable evening.

The consequence of that day's ride and that evening's association was, that I had to undertake to drive the London

end of this said coach, of which my new friend was part proprietor.

I had not much time to consider their proposition, after retiring to rest; for the length of the ride and the goodness of the entertainment caused me to sleep very soundly. Waking early in the morning, I recalled the overnight's conversation, and, after some little deliberation, resolved to profit by it as soon as occasion would permit.

I had been offered a situation as a commercial traveller in a large wine-house in London; but having known some of these gentlemen, and observed how their habits tended to a short, though to them perhaps a pleasant life, I hung, as it were, in the balance—more particularly as the man I was to succeed was then in the last stage of diseased liver and lungs, at something considerably under forty years of age.

I did not immediately return to town, but, at the invitation of mine host, who was a capital fellow, I remained nearly a week, enjoying the salubrity of the air in daily drives—one day going to Warwick Castle, whose tall keep and old walls, with its galleries filled with portraits, and its halls lined with ancient armour; its extensive domain, as viewed from the western front or windows, gives a pretty good idea of what a feudal baron was, and brings to recollection the deeds and character of the last and most powerful of that class, whose name is illustrious in our history as the King-maker, and is the subject of one of the best productions of the best of novelists; *—the next day going to Stoneleigh Abbey, then the seat of Chandos Leigh, Esq., who was afterwards ennobled by the title of Lord Leigh, and still holds possession of one of the

* “The Last of the Barons.”

most beautiful seats in the county of Warwick. Afterwards I went to Kenilworth, now a ruin, but to me not half so romantically situated or so interesting as those of Corfe, although its history is rife with incidents of the court of Queen Bess, and is the scene of one of the most admired fictions of the great Wizard of the North.

My evenings were spent in company with my friend, who returned from his drive about six, and daily we became more closely allied; nor did he one day omit to importune me to take hold, as he termed it, in which he was always backed by our little merry host. To this I could give no satisfactory response, as I felt considerable unwillingness to ask even my father to displace any man on my account. What was my surprise, then, when, on his return one evening, I could but observe, though always a

good-tempered looking man, his eyes sparkled with unusual joy as he told me that Humpy—as he called him—was off; that my father, annoyed at his insolent and assuming manner, had summarily dismissed him, and had sent out “a yokel” with the coach, and would insist upon it that the box was reserved for me. I did not doubt the former part of his information, but the latter I did very much. However, nothing would do, inhospitable as it may seem, but that I must return with him in the morning—which I did, equally charmed with my reception and his good intentions towards me, deeply impressed with the beauty of the county, and ready to subscribe to the truth of its celebrity for good ale and pretty women.

Arrived in London, I prevailed on my father, much easier than I expected, to allow me to take possession of the box;

and on the following Monday I entered on my new vocation. To speak technically, the drag to which I was appointed was the first, and continued some few years the only, day-coach to Birmingham. After passing through St. Albans, Dunstable, Stony Stratford, Towcester, and Weedon, it proceeded through Leamington and Warwick, turning out of the direct road (through Coventry) at Daventry, making the whole distance 112 miles.

Starting from London at five in the morning, my functions ceased at Redbourn, a large village four miles beyond St. Albans, where I had to await the arrival of the up-coach from Birmingham at six in the evening, and then return to London, which I reached between nine and ten.

With this arrangement I was by no means displeased, for the reason that everything was new to me. I wanted

change, and I had it. I was removed from the scene of my former enjoyment, it was true; but the regret for that was counterbalanced by the satisfaction I felt at being comparatively unknown in what I could but consider my present menial condition. I drove none but my father's cattle, therefore I had no blustering country proprietor to bully me. At the inn or public where I stopped at Redbourn the passengers breakfasted, so that I collected my fees without any difficulty; and though at first with some little repugnance, this was soon obliterated by the generally cheerful manner in which the custom of a spontaneous offering was adhered to. Another thing, the coach loaded well, seldom in the summer months a day passing without a full complement of passengers, and, I may say, almost all of a very genteel description; so that in a little time I became recon-

ciled to my fallen estate, with which, no doubt, the certain remuneration, without any risk or outlay on my part, had much to do.

But how was I to pass my time? The many hours I should have to remain waiting for the up-coach, how were they to be disposed of? The place being a great thoroughfare, on the highroad to Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool, Leicester, Nottingham, Sheffield, &c., the mails to those places, with many other coaches, changed horses there, and it might be called a depot for horses and horse-keepers; consequently the inhabitants consisted chiefly of publicans, and a few small shopkeepers and tradesmen. Many other coachmen stopped here, but none so long as myself, as mine was the first coach down in the morning, and the last up at night. At first I felt this vacant time as a great incon-

venience, which, however, I presently found means to alleviate by indulging in my fondness for books; and frequently, on a fine day, I would saunter about the lanes and fields with one in my hand.

On one of these occasions I found myself in what had a semblance to a gentleman's park; and, observing a rustic seat under a wide-spreading oak, I took the liberty of setting myself down and resting. I liked the spot so much—for it was on the rise of a hill, and commanded some beautiful scenery—that I repeated my visit several times, till one day I was accosted by a man, dressed like a gamekeeper, who, after asking my name, which I did not hesitate to give him, touched his hat, and departed. The next day, to my great surprise, I received a note from the owner of the mansion and park, threatening to indict

me for a trespass should I make my appearance there again. Upon inquiring why such a proceeding was thought necessary, I found I was suspected of being in search of pheasants' eggs; and this caused a very angry correspondence between me and the gentleman, in which I did not fail to animadvert upon the illiberal construction he had put on my innocent recreation.

I should not have mentioned this slight incident, were it not to contrast it with another of a very opposite nature. Sauntering one day in another direction, after wandering along bye-paths, through fields and woods, I emerged suddenly on a green lawn, in full view of a fine mansion. It would have appeared that I was observed, for a person issued from the lower apartments, came towards me, and, raising his hat, politely asked if I wished to see the house. Surprised at his question, as

well as his manner, I said (having my late error uppermost in my mind) I was sorry I had so unwittingly trespassed, but if he would be kind enough to point out the nearest way to the turnpike road, I would immediately retire; to which he, with a smile, replied, there was no necessity for that. His lordship, he added, had sent him purposely to ask me in, and show me the house and grounds, if I desired it.

"What nobleman," said I, "has done me such honour?"

"Lord Verulam."

"What?" I said, "is this Gorhambury, once the seat of the great Lord Bacon?"

"The same, sir," said my conductor.

"I had no thought that I was anywhere so near it. I should like very much to see it."

"Then come with me, sir." Closing my book and putting it in my pocket, I accompanied him into this handsome and

interesting residence, which I believe was built somewhere about the middle of the last century. The magnificent portico is supported by eight lofty and substantial pillars, with Corinthian capitals, and the elevation is in a similar style of architecture; the rooms are good though not spacious, and were replete with every comfort, and furnished in a fashion suitable to the dignity of its noble and esteemed owner. It did not contain any extraordinary work of art, and the paintings consisted chiefly of family portraits, by Vandyke, Sir Peter Lely, Sir Godfrey Kneller, Sir Joshua Reynolds, and other esteemed artists. A picture that attracted much of my attention was a likeness of one of his lordship's celebrated ancestors, Sir Harbottle Grimstone, who was closely allied to the five members demanded by Charles the First, when he went down to the House of Commons

for the purpose of arresting them, and was conspicuous in and out of the House for the share he took in the proceedings on that occasion — which ill-advised act was followed by the civil war, that finally consummated that unfortunate monarch's destruction.

Passing one room, where my conductor said his lordship was at present engaged, he took me first to the conservatory, full of a variety of the most beautiful and rare exotics; then to the forcing-houses, where multitudinous clusters of grapes hung from the roof in great profusion and perfection. I could but stop and feast my eyes on so pleasing a sight, admiring how art could be made to surpass nature, and cause this cold and cloudy clime to rival the productions of the sunny south. Leaving this place with a "lingering look behind," I proceeded to the ruins of the old mansion.

Here there is ample food for the archæologist, particularly in the small tower or entrance, which gives evidence of a date far anterior to that of Elizabeth. The ordinary observer might place its erection in the time of our Norman kings, but he would be at a loss to account for two Roman medallions on each side of the building (one of a Cæsar), in excellent preservation, unless he knew that they had since been discovered in the neighbouring ruins of Verulam, and purposely placed there.

My companion then pointed out the room which the great chancellor generally occupied, when pursuing his studies after his retirement from Court;—when that mighty mind threw open the doors of knowledge, and founded a system of philosophy that has obtained through each succeeding generation, and has been of more benefit to his country and mankind than

all the boasted and splendid productions of the ancients ; or, indeed, any that have dared to soar in regions which the most powerful of human intellect alone can reach in any age or nation — our own Sir Isaac Newton alone excepted.

He may have been, is now, and will be, followed, imitated, almost worshipped, and his works illustrated and embellished — by others, his highly-gifted and talented admirers — but there he stands in the pages of our history, the Jupiter Olympus of a sublime conception, masterly design, sound reasoning, and useful knowledge — combining to form a practical progressive philosophy, that has earned for him a title far more enduring than any a sovereign can bestow.

But I am wandering, as I did years ago, among the ruins of that great man's habitation. I turned from it with thoughts on the infirmity of human na-

ture, and the mutability of mundane affairs; and I was about to take leave of my kind *chaperon*, when he stopped me, and said, "His lordship has desired me to offer you some refreshment." Now, although my mind was wrapped in meditation, I was generally alive to the comforts of the body; and as my walk had been a lengthened one, measured more by time than distance, I freely accepted his invitation, and entering a pleasant apartment, I found everything prepared, that could tempt the most fastidious—as well as satisfy the most craving appetite. After doing ample justice to both solids and liquids, addressing my friend, whom I concluded to be the steward, I said:—

"May I be allowed to ask, to whom I am indebted for this more than common mark of hospitality—to you, sir, or his lordship?"

“ Oh, his lordship, most certainly.”

“ How should that be,” I said, “ when I am quite a stranger to him ? ”

“ Not quite, I believe. Are you not the person who has lately been in correspondence with one of the magistrates, respecting a trespass you committed in Rothamstead Park. I answered in the affirmative; he bowed and said no more.

I then clearly understood what was meant, particularly as my host and my correspondent were neighbours, as well as magistrates; therefore taking leave of my companion, and requesting him most respectfully to thank his lordship from me, for this especial mark of his favour, I returned to Redbourn, well pleased with my walk and entertainment, contrasting in my own mind the conduct of a man ennobled by worth, as well as by rank and wealth,—with that of one of mean understanding, who, possessing but one qualification ne-

cessary for his position, had not a spark of generosity or gentlemanlike feeling in his whole composition.

It was not long after this, when I had, by my solitary walks, or other means with which I was unacquainted, become pretty well known in the neighbourhood, that one of Lord Verulam's tenants, occupying a farm adjoining the town of Redbourn, invited me to dinner. I accepted the invitation; and after receiving a hearty shake of the hand from my new acquaintance, and as polite a reception from his wife, a lady of prepossessing appearance and genteel manners, he introduced me to his friend, in whom I immediately recognised the gentleman who had been so assiduous in his attention to me at Gorhambury.

— He expressed his gratification at meeting me again, and we sat down to an excellent repast, in which I satisfied my host that I

well knew how to appreciate that part of his entertainment. After the cloth was withdrawn, and the bottle had circulated a little, it did not take me long to discover, that I was indebted for my invitation to the gentleman whose acquaintance I had already so unexpectedly made at Gorham-bury. It was natural that the conversation should turn on that meeting, and I learnt that the correspondence already spoken of, which had been read before the Bench, had attracted Lord Verulam's attention, and raised perhaps alike his curiosity and his disapprobation of the conduct of his neighbour—hence my reception at the hall, and the gratification I there experienced.

Flattered at having made a favourable impression, I failed to perceive that the good old port, of which the host was by no means sparing, was likely to make an impression on me. Wishing, as I supposed,

to mark the favour I had done him by partaking of his hospitality, and knowing my time was limited, he finished the entertainment with two bottles of excellent claret. He requested me not to hurry myself, as he had ordered his gig, and would himself drive me to Redbourn, a distance of little more than a mile. Nothing loth, I followed his suggestion, and swallowed glass after glass with considerable gusto.

Taking my leave of the fair lady, and my friend the steward, I stepped into the gig that was at the door; soon became conscious that I had over-stepped the bounds of prudence. I was, nevertheless, in full possession of my senses, and in no fear of not keeping my equilibrium.

Arriving at the inn, I found the coach there, the horses put to, and the passengers seated—the proprietor, who resided there, looking very serious; and the

coachman who had brought the coach up standing by his side, with a significant smile.

Without saying a word, except wishing my entertainer good evening, I took hold of the reins, mounted without any difficulty, and drove off, determined, as I thought, to be doubly particular and careful. As usual, I pulled up at St. Albans for a minute or two. I did not get off the box; indeed, I was afraid to trust myself, for I began to feel more and more the effects of the quantity, as well as the quality, of the wine I had taken. However, we proceeded very steadily and very well to the top of Ridge Hill; from thence, the worst part of the stage being over, the horses were accustomed to go the last four miles at a more rapid pace—consequently I put them on a little faster, and, passing through the turnpike-gate at Mimms,

they being all very fresh, I fancied they would like a gallop ; so after leaving the village, going down the little descent that opens on to the Wash, I, as the term is, “sprung ’em.”

I was perhaps in the middle of the road, and the fence on my off-side being very high, I did not observe the Manchester “Cobourg” coming round the corner, at about eight or nine miles an hour—I going about double that pace. Just before we got to the turn, we met : my leaders flew out of the road at the instant, over a small ditch on to a bank, where was a lodge with a white gate leading to a residence then occupied by the Duke of Leeds. The carriage-road extended from the lodge into the turnpike, and was marked by two white posts. Inside the first my horses passed, but the sudden jerk in crossing the ditch threw me off, and I lay on my back in

the road, and, for a moment, saw the coach falling on me; but in that same moment the body of the coach struck the post, and the hind wheel having spanned the ditch, she, as the sailor would say, righted; and, with the force from the speed they were going at, broke down the other post, regained the road in safety, and were stopped just as they reached the little bridge over the Wash:—a most miraculous escape for me.

The passengers, who sat still, were unhurt; but one gentleman, in jumping off the hind part of the coach, sprained his ankle, and, sore with pain and fright, he insisted upon being conveyed to London in a post-chaise. One or two of the others accompanied him—at which I could not help observing, that there is generally one troublesome customer among the passengers when anything occurs, and he is always sure to be a

member of the legal profession. As it was, I thought myself well off by paying for the post-chaise, and the injury done to the off-leader of the Manchester coach—my roller bolt having lacerated his shoulder to such an extent as to render him useless.

Altogether, this gross indiscretion on my part cost me 20*l.*—an inconsiderable sum compared to what might have happened, but enough to purchase a resolution never to throw a chance away again. I assure my readers that, in my long career, it was never repeated.

CHAPTER V.

THE BOX.

Modern Philosophy—Sir Robert Walpole—A Railway Director—Coach Passengers—A Birmingham Man—The St. Leger—The Post-Horse Duty—A Strange Bet—Self-approbation—A Warwickshire Grazier (Culloden)—A Lace Buyer—Female Accomplishment—R. W. Elliston—Don Juan—A Dashing Military Officer—A Pleasant *tête à tête*—The Retreat to Corunna—General Lefevre Desnouettes—Sergeant Bunn, of the 18th Hussars—The Emperor Napoleon I.—A Cartel—A Sad *Finalé*—A Good Character.

“THE proper study of mankind is man,”
is a maxim as durable, nay, as imperishable, as is the fame of the man who

wrote it—an author whose poetic works adorn our literature, and whose name will ever be held in that veneration and esteem his writings are calculated to inspire, and to justify the verdict pronounced on both, by contemporaries and posterity. Nevertheless, worthy as his words are of all acceptance, they are capable of two constructions—Man in relation to his God ; man in relation to his fellow-man.

Man, the sublime image of his Maker : man, the diminutive and distant, yet perfect, reflection of the great Creator's attributes, praising and glorifying His infinite wisdom, goodness, and power ;—and man toiling in his predetermined lot, fulfilling his prescribed career, urging, bending, controlling all things in creation to his use : man, enjoying and exulting in the reward due to the judicious exercise of his corporeal or mental functions.

No man can refute the justice of this

axiom; and in its latter sense all men may claim a right to apply it to their own immediate associations. It has been and is practised, in the court and in the cabinet, in the camp and in the cockpit, on the bench and in the senate; and many of our great men owe their elevation and possession of power by steadily pursuing it.

If this be the truth—and our history, as well of to-day as of yesterday, gives irrefragable proof that it is so—it must equally apply to the different grades that make up this vast and varied community. Its principle relates as much to the man who could raise himself from the box of a stage-coach to be at the head of an extensive railroad company, and afterwards to be a Member of Parliament—the highest honour, we are told from the hustings, an Englishman can aspire to—as it does to that minister

who could boast of his knowing the price of every man in the House of Commons — sufficient evidence that both had made man their study, and by that one talent only did the latter maintain his supremacy in the councils of two successive sovereigns ; and by the same rule did the former, aided, perhaps, early in life by fortuitous circumstances, work himself up to the ascendancy and distinction he both desired and deserved.

I have been led into this train of reflection merely to show that the coach-box is not the worst school for acquiring the knowledge already spoken of — though, perhaps, the person occupying that position may have made it only a place of observation and amusement, and as such may not have turned it to advantage.

The gentleman above referred to has now paid the debt of nature, and it is

but due to his memory to state that, to his indefatigable perseverance, his application to business, his forethought and general capacity, is to be attributed the success of that company of which he was so long and so deservedly the head; which, for its efficiency and its remuneration to the shareholders, ranks among the first railroad companies in the kingdom. At his death he had accumulated near half a million of money, it is said—an immense sum for a coachman to realize—more, perhaps, than the industry and talents of any one man ought to realize; and to his lasting praise it must be recorded, that he did not forget, but took pains to provide for, many of his dependants, whose means of subsistence were destroyed by the introduction of the new method of travelling. Had others upon whom the author had far greater claims done the like, he would

not have been in the unenviable position for the last ten or twelve years, to which that great change condemned him.

The road on which I now drove, and more particularly the coach I was on, admitted of a far greater variety of character than the one I recently quitted. Going to a large manufacturing town, and passing through a rich agricultural and pastoral district—which included a place of fashionable resort rising yearly in favour with the public—I had an opportunity of making the acquaintance of the button-maker from Birmingham, with his cadaverous hue, soiled white waistcoat, and unwashed hands; the jolly-looking, lusty grazier, his cheeks glowing with health, and his long drab coat enveloping a form that told of an unrestricted enjoyment of the good things of this world, a few of which class half the year were my regular clients;

the lace-buyers, who bi-monthly visited Stoney Stratford and Towcester, and their neighbourhood; the pretty Warwickshire lasses, who periodically came up for the fashions; and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, as I will term those who inhabited the delightful spot—that, being free from the smoke of furnaces on the one hand, and the busy turmoil of the great metropolis on the other, held out such flattering invitations to, and administered to the wants of, the votaries of pleasure—and, last to be enumerated, those votaries themselves.

Among my most frequent companions from the first-named place was an extraordinary character; even the present Member for that then unrepresented borough has not attained greater celebrity in its neighbourhood. Unlike our Quaker friend, political power nor senatorial distinction had any charms for

him. Money, with the pleasures and enjoyments it produces, was his object, and fortune seemed to mark him as an especial favourite; for she tempted and rewarded his advances with her choicest gifts, and his name and fame were as familiar to the inhabitants of Birmingham then, as is that of the great Radical orator now,—though the origin, as well as the career of the two men, were very different. He was not a button-maker, or a gun-maker, or a hardware manufacturer at all; but he had contrived to hammer out himself considerable wealth, from the pulpit or rostrum of the well-known and much-frequented repository he had established.

“By what bye-paths and indirect crooked ways” he had risen to this station no man but himself could tell. Illiterate in the fullest meaning of the word—not being capable at one time of writing

his own name even—he had ascended from the very lowest step in the ladder of life, and, by dint of intuition, perseverance, and cunning, had ultimately attained the topmost round—that summit which many of our magnates have aspired to all their lives in vain:—he won the St. Leger—and rightly named his horse* after the town that had been the scene of both his struggles and his success.

Providence had given him a help-meet for him, who conducted his correspondence, superintended his books, graced his hospitable board, and otherwise, by the ease and unaffected politeness of her demeanour, and the use of good, sound common sense, had contrived to make his name respected and his acquaintance desired by men of all grades and people of all denominations.

About the time I knew him he had

* Mr. Beardsworth's "Birmingham" won the St. Leger in 1828.

reached the meridian of life, and to all appearance was moving in a respectable sphere. His manners and speech were homely, but not coarse, his conversation fluent on all matters of business of any and every description; he was apparently of a kindly disposition, his spirits were always good, and he was ready to enjoy a joke, though at his own expense. As a proof of this I must mention, that among his multitudinous affairs—for he dabbled in anything where there was a chance of gain—he was a contractor, or farmer, of the Post-horse Duty, a part of revenue arising from and paid by those who were licensed to let horses for hire, which duty was put up to public tender by the commissioners at Somerset House every third year,—England and Wales being divided into districts,—each district containing six or seven counties—Scotland being a district of itself.

In this admirable school he had received his education, and had been early initiated in all the art that was frequently resorted to for the greater, though, no doubt, fair remuneration of the lessees. Now, to the shrewdness of intellect—or, perhaps, sharpness might be the more proper term—necessary for the members of this unique fraternity, the acquirements of the betting-ring or the stock-exchange were as nothing. Such practice might be styled the acme of human ingenuity, as exhibited within the pale of the law.

My friend from Birmingham had already established his fame as a principal member of this community, by imparting something to the Commissioners, by which they could contrive to screw a little more out of the pockets of the innkeepers, and thereby very much increase the revenue; for this they had rewarded him with a present of 1,000*l*.

The gift had created some jealousy on the part of his compeers; but a good understanding seemed to prevail among them the evening they all met prior to the letting, at an hotel in the city, where my friend would have me accompany him after my arrival in London. In the course of the conversation that arose I found he had credit for enlarging or exceeding the truth in matters of both small and great importance, as had another gentleman in the company, who was remarkable for a deep and crafty expression of countenance, and came from Newbury; he was well stricken in years, and did, by the relation of some few discrepancies the other had been guilty of, astonish the whole company.

My friend took it all very good humouredly, and repaid him in the same coin, till each of them, vieing with the other on the palpable absurdity of their stories, and taking credit for their own skill in exag-

geration, my friend challenged the other in a bet for a dinner and wine for the party, amounting to about twenty, to decide which of the two, to make use of the vernacular, should — pardon, gentle reader — tell the biggest lie.

They tossed for first speaker, which was won by the elderly gentleman, who, after collecting all the solemnity he could into his wizened visage, rose from his seat, and said in a slow and audible voice, at the same time striking his hand upon the table, to make his expression more forcible — “There is not an honestest man in England than John Beardsworth.” A roar of laughter was the result, for everyone well understood this pointed satire. This was no sooner over, than all eyes were turned on his opponent. He sat with his elbows resting on the table, and his face covered with his hands, and did not appear to heed the mirth his adversary’s laconic speech

had elicited; but seemed to be considering what he should say in retaliation. What was our surprise, then, when, gently raising his head from his hands, and looking round the room with a complacent smile, he said—"Gentlemen, I'll pay the bet."

The next day the majority of the company, myself included, for he insisted on my remaining in town—sat down to as good a dinner as the city of London could provide, and no expense was spared in the variety or quality of the wines. The winner and the loser sat at each end of the table, and to my great surprise no reference whatever was made to the subject of the bet. All passed off in the greatest good humour, heightened, no doubt, by the success that one and all had met with at Somerset House in the morning. The bill was called and cheerfully paid by my friend, without a syllable being said by the company; and when they dispersed,

and I retired to bed, I might have said, this man has made mankind his study to some purpose.

In those sturdy and useful sons of the soil whose company I generally had up on the Saturday or Sunday, and down on the Tuesday, I met with little variety of character, and nothing to call for any particular notice, except that with them I found myself quite at home, both on the box and on the Monday evening at their inn, after their day's work in Smithfield, when enveloped in one cloud of smoke, imbibing strong potations, and making display of as many acquirements as their vocation required. These they all seemed to know how to apply. Although their conversation would not extend beyond the breed of oxen, I listened with attention when they discussed the peculiar qualities of each, and their adaptation to this or that particular soil. I also discovered that they were all

men of substance in every sense of that word; among them, I remember, was the father of the young man so heartlessly and cruelly sent to his last account by that inhuman monster, Palmer.

I remember about this time going into a field at Redbourn, where there was a drove of Highland oxen, on their way to Barnet Fair. Observing three or four among them with particularly large and wide-spread horns, evidently worked oxen, and otherwise shewing symptoms of mature age, I asked the drover—a pure Scotchman—how old he might suppose them to be.

“Indeed,” said Sawney, “I canna’ say; they might have draw’d the ’tillery for Charley at the battle of Culloden, for aught I know!”

The lace buyers were men of ordinary capacity and ordinary conversation; nevertheless, from them I learnt the nature of

the occupation of the female part of the community they were in the habit of visiting, which spoke much for the industry and cleanliness of the cottagers in that part of the country. What a pity that machinery, in the wide-spread good that it has accomplished, should, at its outset, be subversive of such qualities.

In the summer months I was indulged, frequently, with the company of some of the fairer part of the creation, and their attraction, I could find, was not diminished by surveying and enjoying the beauties of nature from the roof of a stage-coach; indeed, it seemed to give additional charms to their conversation, and awaken a degree of interest that would sometimes create a feeling I thought buried in the grave. This, however, was only transient, though I recollect one fair creature made a little deeper impression on my memory than

usual, by a request, to be allowed to add to the accomplishments she already possessed, that of driving four horses. There was such a novelty in this petition, so much *naïveté* in her manner of expressing it—it, too, was accompanied with so sweet a smile, and was so earnest an appeal to my gallantry, that it completely surmounted all the scruples and objections I could entertain. I instantly gave her the reins, and sat by her side, she taking my seat while she drove one entire stage, and acquitted herself with good execution and judgment, as much to my surprise as her own satisfaction and delight.

Another of my frequent and most pleasant companions from Mesopotamia, as I have termed those two delightful places, Warwick and Leamington, was a man who still lives in the memory of my readers, and whose fame has been re-

corded by far more able pens than mine. He was domiciled then at the latter place, and being at the same time the lessee of the Olympic, was frequently backward and forward. I had some slight knowledge of him before, having met him at a dinner-party in London, consisting chiefly of theatricals. At our first interview on the coach-box he recognized me, and expressed himself glad to renew the acquaintance ; and his conversation teeming with anecdotes of authors and actors of his time, his harmless satire and his turn for mimicry and ridicule, made his company at all times agreeable. The gratification he professed to have in my society made me look forward, with pleasurable anticipation, to the time of having him for my box companion. He was always in good spirits, and had something fresh to communicate from the literary world. He had, some how or other, become

prepossessed that I had a talent that way, and was continually urging me to give the world proof of it, and himself at the same time, by writing a play ; and all that I could say in derision or ridicule never disabused his mind of so fallacious an opinion.

One fine summer's morning, I recollect he had a parcel in his hand, which he would not allow the porter to dispose of with his other luggage. After we had left the "Peacock" at Islington, he opened it, when it proved to be a copy, in quarto, of the first and second cantos of "Don Juan," which had been sent him by the publisher the day before, by desire of the noble author, who was then, I believe, in Italy. He read it aloud in a clear, natural voice, in a vivacious and emphatic strain, quite in accordance with the spirit of the subject, and sufficiently audible for the passengers on the roof to hear and to enjoy.

Among them was a man habited as a sailor, and a regular tar he was (a *rara avis* in that latitude), who evinced his delight by rubbing his hands, and laughing aloud at some of the incidents, so graphically depicted in that rare, but not very chaste, production; this caused my friend to stop and look round, and then to pursue his task with additional zest. When he had finished, and all had thanked him for the great treat he had given us, he told me he was in treaty for Drury-Lane Theatre, and had written to Lord Byron to prepare him a tragedy, intimating the existence of a compact between him and the noble poet; "and now, my dear sir," he added, "do you do the same. I am sure it is in you; therefore, pray turn your mind to it." I took my leave of him that morning, thanking him for his company; but thinking little of his knowledge of my understanding.

About two or three weeks after this, I was proceeding one evening at a pretty good pace through Highgate archway, the spot where I usually met the mails, six in number, coming out of London, when one of them hailed me to pull up, as he had done. I did so, and immediately the door of the Holyhead mail opened; a gentleman got out, and, coming towards me, placed one foot on my roller-bolt, his left hand holding by my box-iron, I instantly recognised my friend, R. W. Elliston, who hurriedly said, "Give me your hand: I have this day become the lessee of Drury Lane, signed and sealed not two hours ago; now, I look to you to help me all you can—so write me a play, and set about it as early as possible." I could not restrain a smile, as he grasped my hand; though I wished him all the success he could desire in so gigantic an undertaking. He returned

to his vehicle—to digest the extra bottle of wine I supposed he must have taken on such an occasion—while I remained to ruminate on the infatuation of a man so well up in most things, but who had studied his fellow-man to very little purpose.

I must now draw on my memory for an example of another class of persons.

Idlers, in search of health, pleasure, or amusement, sometimes took their seats in the only conveyance that went direct from the metropolis to this second Bath or Cheltenham. Among them was one who might literally be called a man of fashion; his appearance, manners, and conversation, evinced the finished gentleman of the Irish school; there was that also in his exterior which always marks the military man—an upright carriage, with a

sort of *bon-hommie* expression. His confident brow was accompanied by a full laughing eye and a brilliant complexion; while the good-natured smile that played upon his lips not only rendered his address at all times agreeable, but would pre-dispose anyone in his favour. His figure, too, naturally good, had been improved by his profession. In short, he was a person who, from experience, had a perfect knowledge of the ways of the world, and had himself played a considerable part in it. It was therefore impossible to be in his company for a few hours on the box, without being highly pleased with his conversation.

From motives that were afterwards explained to me by my brother whip from Warwick, he had taken a house near the road, some few miles the London side of Southam; had furnished

it with every comfort, and formed a respectable establishment. This was intended only as a temporary residence, as he advertised in the provincial papers that he wanted to purchase an estate of some magnitude, in either of the Counties of Oxon, Warwick, or Bucks.

As our intercourse was frequent, we became on familiar terms ; and after repeated invitations to accompany him to his residence, I promised compliance. Accordingly, on a stated day, leaving a deputy to take the return coach, I got off at Weedon, and walked from thence to his house. I met with a hearty welcome, and, after showing me his horses, four in number, apparently of the most valuable description, his lawns and conservatory, then his library and cellar, we sat down to a dinner, as *recherché* as such a distance

from the metropolis would admit. A brother whip was to have joined us, but, being disappointed in the man who had promised to officiate for him, I was quite alone with my entertainer.

The conversation during dinner was on the common occurrences of the day. We were waited on by a man out of livery, and it did not require an *habitué* to discover that, had his board been graced with people of the first quality, and of both sexes, my host would have done the honours with elegance and ease.

As it happened, we were *tête-à-tête* over wine of the choicest vintage; and, after a pretty free circulation of it, he, I may say, gave me his history, or at least part of it. It was interesting, as it related to the Peninsular war, of which I had read much, and heard more, from

my friend the Commissary, and others who had been present in some of the engagements, and had witnessed the privations that generally attended the alternate advance and retreat of our forces.

My friend, it seems, was the younger son of a respectable Irish family; had entered the army young, and had volunteered into the Portuguese service—on the first occasion, immediately after the Convention of Cintra, and before the formation of the Lusitanian Legion by Sir Robert T. Wilson, under whose command it did such essential service; to this force he was afterwards attached. His regiment of Caçadores formed part of the army that advanced into Spain under Sir John Moore, and in the disastrous retreat to Corunna, formed part of the rear-guard, which was continually engaged with the advanced troops of the enemy, who,

headed by Napoleon himself, with the corps of Soult and Ney, were absolutely, in the words used by that great military chief, driving us into the sea. "Upon one occasion, when very much harassed with their cavalry," my host stated, "we made a stand, and by a judicious movement had hemmed in their advanced guard. Lord Paget, at the head of a brigade of our hussars, made a desperate charge upon them, which completely broke their line, and enabled our fellows to take many prisoners. Among others was Bonaparte's favourite Cavalry General, Lefevre Desnouettes."

I had listened with great attention and interest up to this time, when I interposed, and said, "I knew the man who took him."

"I took him," he said.

"Pardon me," I replied; "he was taken by a Sergeant of the 18th Hussars,

I always understood. Indeed," I added, "I had it from the Sergeant's own lips: his name was Bunn."

"Hear me," said my friend; "we both are right. Sergeant Bunn, with a dozen or more troopers, had surrounded the General on the battle-field, and demanded him to surrender. He refused to give up his sword, as there was no commissioned officer present, the rest of the regiment having galloped on in pursuit; and he and his *aide-de-camp* would have been sabred, had I not opportunely stepped up, and, speaking to the General in French, he immediately gave me his sword. You will no longer doubt me, I hope."

I bowed, and attempted an apology.

"Say not a word about it," he exclaimed; "you were not aware of the nice points of etiquette or chivalrous honour displayed on such occasions; but pray, may I

ask where were you acquainted with Serjeant Bunn?"

"At Portsmouth," I said, "when the army disembarked from Corunna; and recently at St. Albans, where the regiment was disbanded."

He then proceeded:—

"On the following morning I presented the French General at head-quarters, and he was sent to England from Vigo or Corunna, prior to our evacuating the latter place."

"And subsequently," I added, again interposing, "broke his parole, and regained France in an open boat; which was considered a most extraordinary feat."

"Well," he said, "the short time we were together we grew in each other's estimation, and at parting he thanked me for the kind treatment and courtesy he had received, saying, 'We may never meet again, but should it be your fortune to

become a prisoner in the hands of the French army, endeavour to convey to the Emperor your knowledge of me and the cause of it, and you shall receive similar treatment at our hands.' It so chanced that two or three years afterwards, in the retreat from Burgos, after the battle of Salamanca, I was taken prisoner about the same time as Sir Edward Paget, who commanded a division. I was sent to the rear, and soon after with an escort to Paris, where I heard General Lefevre Desnouettes was, he having shortly before made his escape from England, in the way you have mentioned. I immediately wrote to him, making known my situation. It was not long before the General was at my side, and took me to his hotel. He then asked me in what way he could be of service to me—what was the first wish of my heart? 'To return to England,' I said. At this

he seemed to demur, and was silent for a time. At length he said: 'Will you allow me to introduce you to the Emperor?—he holds a levée to-morrow, where I have to be present.' I replied that I should feel proud of the opportunity of seeing so remarkable a man.

Accordingly, on the following morning, I, attended by the General, was presented to this idol of the French soldiery, and who was at that time the dread of Europe. The General, in a few words, stated that I was an officer in the British army, who had recently been sent prisoner from Spain, and that upon a former occasion, when he was taken by the British, he owed his life to his gallant intercession. The Emperor, with his usual blandness of manner, expressed his pleasure at the interview, and, after ascertaining my country, asked me what rank I held in the British army. I re-

plied, in French, 'A major in the Portuguese service.' 'There is no such rank in the French army, Chef d'Escadron,' said he; 'will you accept the same rank in my Irish Brigade?' 'What would you think of me, Sire, if I were to accept your offer?' I demanded; 'or what would you have thought of any of your officers, this distinguished General in particular, had he taken up arms in our service?'

"*C'est assez,*' said the Emperor; and cut short the interview by ordering a cartel to be provided for me without delay, contrary to his severe practice, for I was the only officer sent home during the whole war; as you must well remember, there was no exchange of prisoners allowed."

So entertained was I with my host's discourse, that it was morning before we retired to rest. While taking my leave of him after breakfast, and during my walk to meet the coach, I could but meditate on

the fortune of war, and the opportunities the military profession afforded for acquiring a knowledge of the world.

My friend had kept the box-seat for me, and no sooner had I placed myself beside him, than, anxious to know how I had spent the preceding evening, he asked me many questions as to my opinion concerning my host, which I did not fail to answer in the favourable manner his handsome treatment and interesting conversation warranted. He then told me that the house he occupied was his father's property, and that his family, anxious to know the cause of his choosing this part of the country for his abode, had discovered that he was laying siege to the heart of a young heiress in the neighbourhood. In the event of this ending successfully, I learnt that my friend had been promised the four best coach-horses England could produce.

I thought it rather strange that the Major should select for a confidant, in so serious a matter as matrimony, one of the fraternity to which I belonged. My friend was, however, one of the most respectable members of it, it has been my chance to know; and if ever this meets his eye, he will recognise the circumstance I am relating, as well as identify the narrator, and probably recall some happy reminiscences of this period of his life.

The most melancholy part of the tale remains to be told. I did not see the subject of it but once or twice after my visit, but I heard from my friend that, two or three months after, the whole contents of the house were in the hands of the sheriff's officer, and that the tenant had left that neighbourhood, never to return. A very few years after I read in the papers that—(as I suppose driven by necessity and pride)—he had condescended

to practices by which on his detection, in accordance with the sanguinary laws then in operation, his life had become forfeited, and, rather than expiate his crime upon the scaffold, that he, it was supposed by means of prussic acid, had terminated his existence, in the condemned cell in Newgate, on the night preceding his intended execution in the front of that prison. The incident caused great excitement at the time.

I will now relate a reminiscence on the road of a totally different complexion.

One winter's morning, before it was light, I was hailed to pull up at the "Cross Keys," in St. John Street, where the Leicester coach usually stopped, and was asked by a gentleman if I could overtake the Leicester coach, which had been gone five or ten minutes.

I replied, "Yes, as its passengers

always stopped to breakfast at St. Albans."

There being no one on the box, he directly occupied that seat, and soon entered into conversation. Finding he had recently been at Portsmouth, I took the opportunity of asking after many of my former familiar acquaintances, most of whom he seemed to know perfectly well. From many circumstances he related of them, it struck me that he might have heard of the individual to whom he was speaking, although I could not recall the slightest knowledge of him.

However, as he seemed to be very communicative, I presently said to him, "You seem to know many of the Portsmouth people, did you ever know of a young man?"—naming my own name.

"Oh, very well," he replied—"a dashing young fellow—used to carry himself rather high, a cut above the others, as he thought himself."

"Do you know what has become of him?" I asked.

"Oh, he has gone to the dogs long ago."

It might have been the third or fourth year of my having left that vicinity, and the subject of our conversation was the demerits of that individual, in which I had the gratification of hearing myself handsomely abused, till we pulled up at the "Peahen," St. Albans, where stood the Leicester coach, without horses, and the passengers all at breakfast.

"What have I to pay?" said my friend.

"Five shillings," I replied.

He immediately tendered me a one-pound note; I called to the Leicester coachman, who generally stood outside the door, to give me the time of day in passing.

"Mr. Fossee, have the goodness to give

this gentleman change for his note—he is going on with you.”

“Certainly, sir,” he said, calling me by name, and touching his hat—for old Tom and I were always on the best of terms.

At hearing my name, my late companion appeared confounded. Getting on the wheel, he gave me the five shillings, and began muttering an apology, saying he was not at all aware of who he was riding with, or he should not so have committed himself. I told him that there was no necessity for any apology, or even of withdrawing anything he had said, for I had been very much amused with his conversation; and after recommending him to be more particular in future as to the correctness of the information he appeared so pleased to impart, I advised him to be careful also how he spoke in strange company of persons he knew so little

about. Again thanking him for the amusement he had afforded me—he at the same time looking very sheepish—I wished him good morning, and drove off.

CHAPTER VI.

MISCELLANY.

Characters of all Grades—The Great Lord Chief—Discontent—The Road to Improvement—Manchester Cobourg—Lawrence Sterne—Liverpool Umpire—A Scene at Finchley—One of the Rudiments of the Art—A Particular Gentleman—The Two Holyhead Mails—An Inquest—Doleful Interview—An Anomaly in Law—The Ship Doctor—Morning Call—Portrait—Reception—Great Horse—Thirsty Soul—A Brother—The Bay of Naples—Wounded Officer—An Operation—Trifling Error—Magnanimity and Forbearance—Messmates—Tobias Smollett—Hearty Buck—St. Albans—An Easter Sunday—The Abbey—Devotion—A Family Picture—St. Augustin—History—Purity of Election—Gallantry—A Funeral—Stratford-on-Avon—Woodstock—Wallingford—The Miller—Strange Courtesy—Impromptu—The Passing Bell—The Churchyard.

AMONG the numerous varieties of human

character I was enabled to study on the box, there chanced to be a sweep, who travelled with me two or three times a-year. Though he was a master man—and came to collect his money from his different customers, the Hertfordshire farmers in that neighbourhood, who used his soot for manure—and I daresay a wealthy man; yet was he every inch a sweep—in appearance, compass of intellect, and desires; for he seemed to have no wish to be ranked above his profession. How little beyond him in conversation and capacity were one or two noblemen, with whom at that time I also became acquainted, who might have changed stations, much for the advantage of the community, with their own stable-boy or game-keeper!

Sometimes a sober divine—occasionally a dignitary of the Church—I found seated by my side, whose conversation

would awaken sympathies that the change of position and the daily repetition of objects presented to my observation, had almost driven from my mind. At other times a barrister, from Warwick assizes, who would raise my wonder at recalling or rehearsing some extraordinary trial, such as that of Abraham Thornton for the murder of a female; which caused a great excitement in the neighbourhood about this time. His ingenious defence, under the guidance of Mr. Campbell, was the first step in the ladder that enabled his Counsel to attain to the summit of his profession; a proof that even the greatest ability is sometimes indebted to accident, or some happy conjunction, for the first and full development of the acumen and depth of legal knowledge of its possessor.

But all these things began to lose their charm, and my thoughts would frequently

revert, sometimes in a sudden, strange, and unaccountable manner, to my former state, and to the irremediable losses I felt I had sustained—the first and greatest of which was domestic happiness; and I ruminated when alone on the comparative hardness of my fate, and silently lamented the apparent waste of the best years of my life. My two children were well cared for by my elder sister after the loss of their mother, and I had since then placed each, a boy and girl, at an excellent school in the immediate neighbourhood of London. But I had no establishment of my own; and it is admitted as a general rule that man must be discontented with his lot. I was not an exception to it. My dissatisfaction was afterwards heightened by an incident by no means peculiar to men of my age in any position desirous of partaking of the real felicities of life.

Nevertheless, I continued to toil on in my vocation, in the exercise of which I fancied I must have improved in my knowledge in the art of driving by the experience I was gaining. I continued it, too, without any accident, and consequently acquired the confidence of the proprietors and the public. Indeed, I considered myself very fortunate, for accidents were not very infrequent; and it fell to my lot to witness two—one of the “Manchester Cobourg,” the other of the “Liverpool Umpire.”

I met the former coach, on my journey up, between Redbourn and St. Albans. The coachman, Foster, kept on the wrong side of the road to avoid the gravel, which was so heaped on as to raise the middle of the road to an unnecessary height. The coach (Manchester-built, and very inferior to those turned out from the factories at Clerkenwell or Little Queen

Street) was heavily laden on the top with luggage as well as passengers; so much so as to raise the centre of gravity above its proper position; and, although I kept on my wrong side that Foster might not have to cross, he, unaware of my intention, endeavoured to do so, when the superincumbent weight, resting upon a very slight base, swayed the coach over on the off-side, and it fell with a loud noise, that reminded me of my own overturn in the Bere Forest.

It was early in the evening, and moonlight. We all jumped down to assist. Fortunately, no one was hurt, and the only cries we heard were those of a woman wailing for her child. It had been in her arms fast asleep, and she had been sitting on the off-side of the roof when the coach went over, but now it could not be found. Fearing it might be under the coach, we made every exertion to get her up, but

first had to undo the luggage-straps and get the loading off the roof. This, together with getting the coach on her legs, we soon accomplished ; but, luckily, no child—for, had it been there, it must have been literally crushed. Presently, I thought I heard the feeble cry of an infant, and looking behind me I saw it, or the white garments in which it was enveloped, lying under the fence or hedge. The rush of the hitherto distracted mother, and the rapture with which she clasped her child to her bosom, formed a scene the pen of Sterne only could describe ; and such as it was, it has never been erased from my memory. Seeing there was no further harm done, and that they had but to reload the coach, I wished them good-night, and proceeded on my way to London.

The other accident, that of the “Liverpool Umpire,” was under very different

circumstances. Owing to an obstruction in the road below Dunstable, occasioned by a heavy fall of snow, four or five of us had started from Redbourn together. We all went at a pretty good pace, though not racing, and passing each other only at the different changes. So—we proceeded to the “Green Man” in Finchley Bottom, where we pulled up, and, to make use of a flash expression, took a drain. Then I fancied my friend on the “Umpire” had had one or two too many, for he was full of his slang, and very noisy. I took no notice of him, as he was the same individual who had heretofore occupied my seat, and whom I have spoken of in a preceding chapter. The two Manchester coaches started first, and my friend Humpy, as he was called (whether from the name of the coach or the hump on his back I do not know) followed, shout-

ing and hallooing at the top of his voice, as he had done all the way from St. Albans. I certainly had a presentiment that something would occur, or I should not have determined to keep behind. However, this I did; and, on rising the hill out of the bottom, I could just discern one of the three close to the fence opposite the "Bald-face Stag," and presently, on reaching that Public, I observed a coach lying on her broadside, the luggage strewn on the road, the fore-carriage broken and otherwise a perfect wreck; and the horses standing quiet, apparently astounded with their strange position. I pulled up, and proceeded to the spot, but a few yards on foot, accompanied by some people from the house.

I need not say it was the "Liverpool Umpire." The passengers were some of them bewailing their bruises, and

others swearing and condemning the conduct of their coachman, who lay on his back in the road perfectly helpless, like a large black beetle—moaning and groaning most hideously, and certainly more injured than anyone else. He not being able to stand, we had him carried into the inn before mentioned. A doctor was soon in attendance, who, in accordance with his own wish, considered it best that he should be taken home as soon as possible. Therefore, as I passed his domicile in St. John's Street, I had him put into my coach, and leaving his horses and the *debris* of his drag to the care of the guard—some of his passengers riding with me—I deposited him safe at his home. Although I thought—perhaps exclaimed—“For life is Hugh of Lambert lame,” he ultimately recovered, and resumed his seat on the box, despite his gross misconduct, but

went ever after hopping to his grave.

Some part of the coach had fallen upon him, and had dislocated or materially injured the hip-joint. The real cause of the accident, I believe, was his having his leader's reins wrong between his fingers, which was done when he took them in his hurry to start, from his box companion, without properly adjusting them. In going round the corner or bend by the "Bald-faced Stag," when he found himself too near the fence, he pulled the wrong rein, which caused his leaders to hug the fence, and, the fore-carriage striking against it, overthrew the coach into the road. He thus committed an act of gross carelessness, or, to say the least, displayed a want of knowledge of the rudiments of his profession.

I remember a gentleman, now long since deceased, whom I would class as

A 1, among many of the same rank who one and all so liberally and so kindly patronized me on my last stage. This most excellent specimen of a country gentleman* frequently honoured me with his company on the box, and was always most particular in giving me the reins after I had remounted, always separating them, and saying, "There are your leaders, sir, and there your wheel-horses;" rather overstrained caution, perhaps, and approaching a little to what might be called the pedantic, but caution not to be despised, and, as has been seen, not at all times injudicious.

But the most serious accident of this description on that road at the time I speak of, was the overturn of the Holyhead mail, by which one of the passengers was killed. An inquest was held at the "Pea-hen," St. Albans, as it occurred just on the de-

* — Tyssen, Esq., of Narborough.

scent, before you come on what is called the New Road, and a verdict of manslaughter was returned against the drivers of the Holyhead mail, and of the Chester. They, it appeared, had been racing; and one, in endeavouring to pass the other on the wrong side, was driven up the bank, and consequently overturned into the road. They were both committed to jail at St. Albans, to await their trial at the next Hertford assizes; and as they were both old servants of my father's or mine—one of them, too, having married a servant of my mother's—I felt interested in their fate, and walked one morning from Redbourn to see them.

I found them ironed like felons; of this indignity they both complained, and one wept bitterly. It struck me as being very strange that men should be degraded as felons, when their utmost punishment, if convicted, could not exceed a twelvemonths'

imprisonment. I remonstrated with the jailer against the ornaments that then adorned their limbs. He replied that it was so ordered by the Mayor. I then waited on his worship, whom I knew, as he had migrated from my native county, and was in full practice at St. Albans as a surgeon. From him I got no redress, as he could only in such a case refer me to his legal adviser, the town-clerk, but he believed the practice was quite correct. The town-clerk soon convinced me, by taking down a book and turning to the statute, that such a degradation was sanctioned by the English law. Consequently the men retained those inconvenient appurtenances to their dress for six months, when they were tried at Hertford, and received as their sentence the utmost extent of punishment for their offence—viz., twelvemonths further incarceration in the county jail; but

were, as our friend Dibdin would say, relieved of their bilboes.

As I have before stated, the long day I had at Redbourn sometimes taxed my patience and equanimity to the utmost, particularly in the winter months; and it became irksome both to mind and body. I could not always be reading; and the inhabitants, consisting, as I have already said, of publicans and little shopkeepers, I could derive but little amusement from a daily intercourse with them. Nevertheless, there was an exception, and that was the doctor, whose acquaintance I had made in the early part of my temporary sojourn. This gentleman had settled here at the termination of the war; but his nature and associations were so opposite to those of the community among whom he had pitched his tent, it was no wonder that they knew nothing of him beyond his profession—nothing of his country, his family,

or connections; only that he had been a *ship-doctor*. This of itself was sufficient to raise my curiosity, and justify, as I thought, my intrusion. Accordingly, one hot summer's morning I called, intending to introduce myself.

After knocking at the door, and waiting some little time, beyond what I thought was necessary, I was about to raise the knocker a second time, when I heard a heavy tread approaching. The door was next opened wide, and an object presented itself to my view that I shall not easily forget—a huge specimen of the *genus homo*, in his shirt and trousers—the former with the sleeves tucked up and the collar unbuttoned and thrown back, exhibited a chest and pair of shoulders that reminded me of the boatswain, whose extraordinary feat I have related in the second chapter. His throat and neck were like the mutilated statue of Hercules in the Disney collec-

tion at Cambridge; and were surmounted by a head that resembled very much the portrait painted on the hind boot of the Liverpool coach, intended to represent a Saracen; indeed, a cast of his bust, as exposed to me that morning, would have done very well for the sign on Snow Hill. His inflated cheeks shone like burnished copper; his large prominent eyes were red with the effects of recent indulgence. Huge drops of perspiration stood upon his expansive brow, as he held out his hand, which in shape and size was like a shoulder of mutton, and said, in a voice not the most musical in the world,

“How are ye?” calling me by name. “Walk in—I’m d—— glad to see ye—it’s d—— hot, ain’t it;” then turning round and sending out a puff, that I can only compare to the expiring blast of a blacksmith’s bellows, he led the way into the parlour. Surprised at his

address, as well as his figure, I scarcely knew what to say ; and he, by way of apologising for his undress, stroked his chin, and told me that he was just going to shave, an operation that he had not undergone very lately.

“ But, how’s your brother ? ” he asked.

“ I was not aware,” I replied, “ that you knew me or my brother.”

“ I knew you,” he replied, “ the first time I saw you, and heard your name, from your likeness to him.”

“ What brother ? ” I said.

“ Why, the lieutenant, to be sure, Bob—where is he now ? ”

When I had satisfied him on that head, I asked him how it was that he had not made himself known to me before ?

“ Why,” he said, “ to tell you the truth, I thought you were too great a horse.”

This, I should tell my readers, is a common phrase with sailors, when speaking of a person whom they think a little lofty; but, I thought, very inapplicable at that time, when used by an enlightened disciple of Esculapius, to one who had become a humble follower of Jehu.

“But where, may I ask, did you know my brother?”

“In the ‘Cyane,’ with Sir Thomas Staines; we were messmates in her when he was a midddy, and I a doctor’s mate—and a fine noble fellow he was. I should very much like to see him again; he and I were always great cronies; everybody in the ship liked him,” he said, “from Tommy”—as he familiarly designated the Captain—“down to the loblolly-boy.”

He then ran on in a purely nautical strain, smacking a little of the Irish ac-

cent, in praise of my brother, whom he described as a thoroughbred sailor, and a brave lad; one who was sure to rise in the service, for he could assume the officer and the gentleman, as well as any of 'em, and he again expressed the pleasure he should have on seeing him.

"Well," I said, "I am sure the pleasure would be reciprocal. I will write to him, and tell him of the discovery I have made."

"Do," he said, "and bring him down with ye, I shall be delighted to see him again."

With this short and elegant colloquy, I rose to leave; but this the doctor would not allow till I had tasted his home-brewed. He set the example, by helping himself from the foaming pitcher, and swallowing two tumblers full in such quick time, that I almost fancied I could hear the liquid hiss as it went down.

The copper's hot this morning, I thought, as I deliberately drank mine, and then made my exit, not a little gratified at hearing such an eulogy on one united to me by ties of unbroken affection, although from the lips of one of the most unpolished orators I had ever heard.

I did as I promised, and it was not long before my brother, attending to my summons, came from Hampshire, and joyfully took his seat by my side. He had always entertained a better opinion of both my heart and understanding than I did myself,—perhaps far better than I deserved; and never suffered the regard and esteem we had for each other to be damaged by any word or deed of his, much less by any change in my fortune.

On our way down to Redbourn he told me this doctor was a very extraordinary character; that when on board

the "Cyane," after the action with the French frigate in the Bay of Naples, having so many men wounded, as well as the Captain, the surgeon of the ship required assistance; consequently, a signal was made to "l'Espoir," a small brig in company, to send their doctor on board, which they speedily did in the person I have already described; he was then only assistant-surgeon, or doctor's mate, as small vessels are not allowed a full surgeon; indeed, that was a degree, I believe, our friend never attained, however his abilities may have deserved it.

On his coming on board, his attention was drawn by his superior to the Captain, who lay in his cot in the cabin, with his shoulder dreadfully smashed, to all appearance suffering the greatest agony, and drifting fast into the vast and fathomless ocean of eternity.

After examining the fracture with as

much care and tenderness as the seat of the wound and his own rough nature would allow, he gave it as his opinion that the injured limb might with safety be removed ; and being asked by the other how he proposed to do it, he replied, by taking it out of the socket.

The patient overhearing this conversation, said he would not submit to any experiment, as he was convinced the wound was mortal, and he wished to await his end in peace. Our Hibernian friend, upon this, calling to his aid a little of that persuasive eloquence so peculiar to his countrymen, assured the Captain it was no experiment at all, for the operation had already been performed with success by Sir Astley Cooper, an account of which he was in possession of, and would, with his permission, read it to him. Having done so, the Captain asked him if he were prepared to perform the

operation himself, to which he answered confidently in the affirmative; his own surgeon at the same time disclaiming all responsibility.

With very little more persuasion the Captain, assured of the self-possession of the man, and the strong nerve denoted in his countenance and manner, at once prepared himself for the knife, which the operator, as it proved, knew well how to use; for the shattered limb was quickly removed. The patient was preserved from a painful death, and in due time restored to the service, of which he proved himself so distinguished a member.

My brother continued to tell me that this was the second time only the operation had been attempted, and performed with success; therefore did the operator get the greater praise, and the fame of it soon re-echoed from the patient's cabin through every man-of-war on the station, and thence through every hospital in London.

But there was something the Doctor liked better than fame, or his fame might have led on to fortune. He was in the habit of sacrificing largely to Bacchus; and though the first week he refrained, and was careful and particular in his attention to his patient, who would not suffer anyone else to dress the wound; yet after that time the Doctor frequently showed symptoms of indulging in potations pottle-deep, which did not escape the Captain's observation. Nevertheless, with an abnegation and magnanimity which formed part of his noble nature, this gallant officer overlooked from time to time those repeated acts of insubordination—acts that amounted sometimes to incapacity of performing his task of replacing the necessary dressings. Gratitude for having preserved his life seemed to be uppermost in the hero's heart, till, finding he was likely to suffer from his

Bacchanalian habits, and that advice and remonstrance were equally vain, he was obliged to call in the services of his own surgeon; and on the arrival of the ship at Spithead, the Doctor was ordered to return to his own brig, since which time my brother had not seen him.

Their meeting, as might be anticipated, was a very jolly one. The two friends seemed to vie with each other in their gratulations, and in asking and answering questions as to their mutual wanderings. The Doctor's did not amount to much, as he left the service at Portsmouth, had formed a matrimonial connection with a sister of one of their messmates, had settled at Redbourn as a medical practitioner, and was at that time a widower.

I could but observe the marked deference he paid to my brother's staid and gentlemanlike deportment, as well as the restraint

he at first put on his inclinations; and as he was possessed of good conversational powers, and had a general knowledge of worldly affairs, the fairer side of the Doctor's portrait was developed. Open and ingenuous, with a good natural capacity, he had studied anatomy and surgery with ardour and advantage; but had failed to discover, that to ensure success in its practice, a study of the amenities of life, and the possession of a polish a little beyond what he was likely to acquire in the cockpit of a man-of-war, were absolutely necessary before he could attain that rank in his profession which men of far less pretensions then occupied.

Indeed the Doctor's character, as exhibited that day, interlarded as his conversation was with scenes from the cockpit, reminded me forcibly of the faithful resemblances inimitably depicted by the pen of Smollett; and in him I thought

I could recognize Rory's messmate, Morgan, who, with the same goodness of heart and proficiency in the art of healing, the same disregard of worldly and personal accomplishments, had sat himself down, as this man had, in a country-town as an apothecary.

I left them together early in the evening to attend to my duty; and so impressed was I with the good qualities of him who had played the host, and of the evil of his besetting sin—for the Doctor had just proposed a North-wester—that I went away muttering, “Oh, that man should put an enemy in his mouth to steal away his brains!”

However, our intimacy did not end here; and one day the Doctor asked me to ride with him to Gadesbridge, the seat of that great benefactor of his species, Sir Astley Cooper. Upon the road I found by his conversation that this ex-

alted member of the profession had been a great friend to him, and, perhaps, was the cause and the means of his practising in that locality. On our return he asked me to do him a favour, to which I readily assented. I learned that it was to get him a buck, or carcase of venison, from Whittlebury Forest, as he said he wished to make his kind friend and patron a present of a haunch, though I afterwards had reason to believe the whole of it was intended for that great chirurgical professor.

Accordingly, I deputed my brother whip, who passed through Stoney Stratford, to procure me one from the steward or gamekeeper of the Duke of Grafton, the hereditary ranger of that royal domain. In due time it arrived; and the man, knowing for whom I had bespoke it, demanded immediate payment of the cost — viz., 7*l.* 10*s.* With

this I complied, though a little surprised at his peremptory manner, and directed the horsekeeper to take the hamper down to the Doctor's house.

Some few weeks after this, during which time I continued my friendship with the Doctor, on my arrival with the coach at Redbourn in the morning, I observed rather an unusual number of the inhabitants in the road opposite the Inn where I pulled up, apparently conversing upon some recent occurrence that very much interested them. On my throwing down the reins, getting off the box, and making my way through the crowd, one of them, who was acquainted with the Doctor as well as myself, held out his hand, and, with particular emphasis, said, "How are ye, my hearty buck?" which caused an unwilling smile upon some of their gloomy countenances. It did not require much further explanation to en-

lighten me as to the subject of their discourse ; which was, the Doctor had suddenly taken flight, leaving this little community to mourn the loss of one who had come among them to heal their infirmities ; and in return to partake of their kind donations of the three great necessities of life — shelter, food, and raiment.

Thus did I lose sight, for a time, of this singular character, who was himself a compound of intellectual capacity and the wants and weaknesses of our nature. His sudden departure preceded mine but a few months, and he afterwards turned up at a beautiful little spot in Hertfordshire, that lay in the way of my frequent peregrinations to the shrine of the Saint to whom I was afterwards so much indebted. I seldom passed it without calling, and was pleased to find the Doctor had once more entered into the

bonds of matrimony, had abated much of his original propensity, and appeared to be in the enjoyment of all the comforts of life.

About this time I became acquainted with a gentleman at St. Albans, who had something in common with myself, in regard to out-door amusement or employment. Occupying a farm a short distance from the town, he managed to keep two or three couple of beagles; and I would frequently ride back from Redbourn on one of the up-coaches, after my journey down, to accompany him on foot to his farm, and regale my ears with the music his little pack would develop when they got upon the track of a rabbit or a hare.

It was not long after this that St. Albans had a far greater attraction in an object pointed out to me by my friend in the Abbey Church, whither I had

accompanied him to attend divine service—an observance, from my coach travelling on a Sunday, I had, to my shame be it spoken, almost discontinued, of which neglect some inward monitor now and then reminded me; and therefore did I readily accept my friend's invitation, more particularly as it was Easter Sunday, and I had never seen the interior of that venerable pile.

There was something always in the return of this day that affected me in a way I did not thoroughly comprehend, and therefore cannot properly express—something it was, that divested the mind of all thoughts of the common occurrences of daily life, and impressed the heart with a joyful sentiment, exceeding all that could be derived from any sensual or social enjoyment. Whether it be that young Spring is then advancing, arrayed in that beauteous gar-

ment Nature has so tastefully provided for her, pouring forth her delightful carols, and bearing in her lap sweet perfumed emblems of her bounty; or whether it be the commemoration of the promises made by the God of Nature, of an eternal Spring to those responsible beings who have faith in His revealed will, hope in His most merciful dispensation, and good will towards their fellow-creatures—either one or the other, or both, will dispose the senses to the purer and more exalted feelings of our condition.

I bent my knee in prayer to the great Giver of good—I joined in the holy chaunt that reverberated round those ancient walls—I listened with attention to the exposition of His holy text—I admired the vastness and solidity of the structure, inspected the different monuments that ornamented its pillars or its

pavement, and departed with what?—With feelings of reverence for the piety of our ancestors who had erected this edifice to the honour of the holy martyr whose name it bears? No.—Or with a lively sense of gratitude for the benefits to be derived from an implicit trust in the mercies and mediation of One whose entrance into everlasting life we were this day called on joyfully to remember? Alas! no.—But with much curiosity and a determination to know more of a certain object that had taken possession of my mind, I left the precincts of that holy temple. I will enter no further into the occurrences of this day—suffice it to say, that the incident strengthened my inclination, and afterwards induced me to leave that road.

But I cannot pass over the consequences this occurrence had upon my future fate or fortune, or its effects upon the employment

and rational enjoyment of my vacant hours. The object of attraction, I soon found, was one of a large and respectable family in the town, and I may say, without fear of being accused of partiality or vanity, fourteen finer specimens of the *genus homo* never sat round a parent's substantially furnished board. It was well, too, to witness the order that was observed in this graduated assembly. Cleanliness and decorum, obedience and affection, contentment and good humour, animated their bright blue eyes, and set off to perfection their fair and rosy complexions. There was nothing either Grecian or Roman in the contour of their countenances, or in their features—neither in them would the sculptor desire anything to commend his art; for the same impression would guide his chisel as did the first sight of our Saxon ancestors strike St. Augustine when he exclaimed, "*Non Angli sed Angeli.*" The first time I was admitted

to put my feet under the same mahogany, my eyes were far more feasted than my appetite, though it was pleasantly and politely courted, and I rose from the table in admiration of the beauty and order of an Englishman's fire-side.

My Sundays were now generally spent at St. Albans, and I was soon made acquainted with the beautiful walks round this interesting old town, the site of so many events in our history. In the valley at the foot of the Abbey orchard or grounds runs the little river Ver—now but a trout stream, though it turns two or three valuable silk and cotton mills; but in the time of the Romans navigable for their armed galleys and stately barges. Crossing it by a plank you come to the walls of the ancient Verulam, where the Roman brick is still visible, and where all attempts to detach one whole have proved futile. Here, too, did the masters of the world under Paulinus defeat

and destroy the army under Boedicea, and took ample vengeance for the massacre of their countrymen.

In the time of the heptarchy, St. Albans became a considerable town—that part of the community whom the fury of the Saxons had spared removing to a hill which afterwards bore the same name—the Abbey being founded and built there by Offa, King of Mercia, in the ninth century—though the British proto-martyr, to whom it was dedicated, was beheaded on the spot some 600 years before.

The court was frequently held here in the time of the Plantagenets, and sometimes the parliament of those days sat here—the family residence of the mitred abbot, the monastery, and the neighbouring nunnery of Sopwell, affording ample accommodation.—One of the most enlightened of our Princes, Humphrey, Duke of Glo'ster, who was much in advance of his age, was in-

tered here, having, it is supposed, been foully murdered, at the instigation of his Uncle, the Cardinal Bishop of Winchester. Two battles were fought here in the wars of the roses, in the first of which a great number of nobles—indeed the chiefs of the Lancastrian party—were slaughtered. In the second the Yorkists were defeated, and the great Earl of Warwick obliged to fly for his life. New England hills, as some artificial mounds are called, apparently a Roman camp is the site of one, and Bernard's heath of the other. The latter is now often the scene of a far less bloody and more rational character—the war or game of cricket.

This old town is also renowned for its political or electoral contests; and before, and more particularly since, the Reform Bill, has always been open to the highest bidder. A pot-walloping borough so near the metropolis, there was

never any lack of candidates, and ludicrous and absurd were the means taken to ensure success. Although it was notorious, and well understood on both sides, that each poor voter was to receive a certain sum, still it was thought necessary to give 20*l.* for a parrot, or 15*l.* for a monkey, just brought from abroad, by some seafaring member of a poor family, to place a London banker, a city alderman, or a scion of the noble house of Blenheim, at the head of the poll.

I witnessed two or three of these exhibitions of the representative system, during the time I drove through St. Albans, and I cannot say they gave me a very lofty idea of the worth of the constituency, the patriotism of the candidates, or the infallibility of our institutions. The practice, which it was the intention of the Reform Bill to prevent, had become more gross and palpable,

till the Legislature thought it necessary to suspend the writ, which still remains in abeyance.

The representation of the county had long been shared, unopposed, by Mr. Brand, afterwards Lord Dacre, and Sir John Sebright; still, they would always, at a general election, give the voters a call of recognition. On one occasion, Sir John, who was noted for his gallantry, called at a house where I was a frequent visitor, and asked for the master; he happened to be engaged at that moment, and one of his daughters, a fine beautiful girl in the bloom of youth, was sent by the mother to receive him; after the morning's salutation, he politely asked—

“Is your father at home?”

“He is, Sir John,” was the reply; “but he is engaged at this moment.”

“I am very glad of it,” said the old

Baronet, "for I would rather shake hands with *you* than any *man* in England."

I stood unseen at a little distance, quite pleased with what I witnessed, and did not know which to admire most — the ready compliment of the man of breeding, or the unaffected confusion of the lovely girl to whom it was addressed. In both I saw plainly that one touch of nature is worth all the gloss of art.

I will not descant on the agreeable walks I had in this beautiful neighbourhood—sometimes in company, sometimes alone—when the thoughts of my former and present position would find vent in strains of impassioned verse.

In the meantime, I was repeatedly called to the bedside of my sick and declining parent at Leamington, and after months of intermittent, intense suffering, with a firmness and resignation worthy

of all imitation, her spirit was dismissed to the regions of the blessed. I, with two brothers, and two sisters, followed her remains across the country, from Leamington to our family vault in Hampshire, which we reached on the fourth day, passing by Stratford-on-Avon, Woodstock, Oxford, Wallingford, Reading, Alton, and Petersfield.

At the first-mentioned town, the birth-place of our immortal bard, we did not stop; but two or three years afterwards, in passing through, I visited what was once his residence, then standing, and had the honour of inscribing my name, in a book kept for that purpose, immediately under those of the two Austrian Archdukes, who had passed through but the day before, as well as on the walls of his bed-room. I also sat in the same chair in which, I was told by an aged female, his supposed lineal descendant, it

was his custom to indulge after quitting the busy scenes of the metropolis—saw the monument or rather effigy erected in the church to his memory, and read his epitaph, written by the English Roscius, which I thought did not sufficiently express the enthusiastic admiration which has always been felt for the writings that bear his name.

At Woodstock we rested for the night, which gave us an opportunity of viewing that splendid national reward to the renowned commander who led our armies to victory on the Continent, foiled the ambition of the Grand Monarque, and made his name famous in our annals. At this time it was inhabited by his descendant—a necessitous recluse. At Oxford we stopt but long enough, to admire the architectural beauties of its High Street, and for me to wish to change the scene of my daily labours to this time-honoured

University, a change I had for some little time contemplated.

At Wallingford we again rested, passing the mansion and estate of Basildon, then the property and residence of a Baronet with whom I afterwards became acquainted.* There was nothing to call for any particular notice or to engage our attention in this little Borough town, where, before the Reform Bill put an extinguisher upon the electoral expectations of the inhabitants, the *Miller*† used to pay his nocturnal visits to each individual voter. My brother and I walked into the coffee-room of the Inn where we had put up, with the intention of reading the London papers, and taking one up, sat down in one of the boxes. I observed a gentleman on the opposite side eye us with what I took to be a look

* Sir Francis Sykes.

† The name given to the official employed on these interesting occasions.

of suspicion, and when the waiter came in he spoke to him, and then walked out apparently very much displeased. On asking the waiter what the gentleman had said to him, he replied that he wanted to know what business we had there, as it was a subscription-room.

This was before dinner; in the evening we went in again to the room, where sat the old gentleman reading the paper that had arrived by that day's post. Observing that he took his eyes off the paper to look at us, I accosted him, "I am afraid we are unwelcome intruders."

He replied with a grunt, and continued the perusal of his paper. "When you have done with the paper I should be much obliged if you would allow me to see it," I said. He made no answer, but when he had finished, he got up, deliberately rolled up the paper, and put it in his pocket, and was walking away, when he was stopped by another who

had observed his demeanour, and who insisted on his leaving the paper on the table. "Do you want it?" he said.

"Whether I want it or not," was the reply, "you have no right to take it out of the room."

Upon which he very ungraciously gave it up, and the gentleman politely handed it to us. After satisfying ourselves, and chatting with the stranger, who gave us an account of his uncouth fellow-townsmen, we returned to our own room, when my brother, still a little sore at his ungentlemanlike conduct, and wishing to retaliate, asked me to write a line or two, and put up on the mantel-piece in the coffee-room. Whereupon, having ascertained his name, I penned the following:—

"Strange animals I've often seen
In many towns where I have been;
But, till I came to Wallingford,
No other place could e'er afford
A brute that on two legs went forth,
And he was yeleft Shuttleworth."

This we left for the offender to digest as best he might, and proceeded on our journey, stopping at Reading to dine, and at Alton to sleep.

At twelve the next day we reached Petersfield, where the passing-bell mournfully tolled as we went slowly down the High Street, and stopped at the principal Inn, where some few who had known the departed came to condole with my sisters on the loss they had sustained, and to recall her many excellent qualities.

Arrived at the place of sepulture, we were joined by my married sister and her husband; while the poor natives of the village, who still retained a lively remembrance of her unostentatious goodness and charity, came to pay their last tribute of respect.

CHAPTER VII.

OXFORD.

King Charles—An Indiscreet Act—A New Country Proprietor—The Cheltenham Coach—Scions of the Nobility—An Unexpected Interview—The Roebuck—Bishop Atterbury—Horse-dealing—Fire and Water—Hydropathic Cure—Reflections—Piccadilly—The Black Dog at Bedfont—A Compromise—An Old Acquaintance—Henley-on-Thames—An Eclipse of the Sun—An Unnatural Son—Full Stop.

KING CHARLES THE FIRST has been made to state, that in mundane affairs there is no such thing as fortune or misfortune, but that all is either discretion or indiscretion. No man had a greater right to say so than that unfortunate monarch. I must have

been the most indiscreet man alive ; for all the exertions I ever made, all I ever undertook or did, to extricate myself from the slough into which untoward circumstances had driven me, only served to plunge me further in the mire.

The person who had succeeded my father in the large establishment I have before spoken of, and who became a very wealthy man—partly, if not chiefly, from my father's ruin, which he had been the principal means of accomplishing—had promised to assist me in my endeavours to regain my position ; and I was simple enough to believe him, and put faith in his promises. This was a folly on my part, and showed want of knowledge of the world, which may well rank as an indiscretion. Nevertheless, it was this promise that first induced me to commit a greater in-

discretion, in quitting a certain and well-established concern for an appointment that was quite new to me, and its success uncertain; thus leaving myself open to the fate of those, whose interests are generally sacrificed or overlooked, when an accommodation or compromise takes place between two hostile parties.

But, indiscretion or not, the change had the recommendation of novelty, and—what was my principal object—the hours of employment would be more congenial to the wishes and domestic comforts of one who was again desirous of having an establishment of his own, however it might differ from the last in degree; of again living not entirely by or for himself, but of providing a new home, however humble it might be, for his two children, where he might become again possessed of those social and ra-

tional enjoyments of which he had been deprived.

I cannot, though at this distance of time, but feel the sting of conscience at leaving my father—that is, his employ—to enter that of one of his most virulent opponents, so soon after a great domestic calamity had befallen him. But it was so. Fate, as the poet says, hurried me on; and, all things being arranged, I started from the establishment I once considered myself heir to, on the box of a new Cheltenham coach, which I was to drive to Oxford. It was intended that I should be a part-proprietor. Indeed, I had promised to work a stage myself, so anxious was I to get upon that road, which appeared to me to be the most fashionable and the most frequented out of London; but, not seeing my way quite clear, I declined—and it was quite as well I did, the coach, as I

might have foreseen, being discontinued within the year.

Now, there were two parties in Oxford concerned in coaches, one of whom I have before spoken of as an old-established country proprietor—a man of the first respectability and considerable substance, who was looked up to by all the fraternity as an excellent master; the other an intruder—a man of whom few spoke well—and for whom I had the greatest dislike, from the vulgar impertinence of his manners, and the evil reports about his tastes. His position and his chicanery just enabled him to allure the simple and unprincipled to unite with him in opposition to the man whom he could injure and annoy, but not ruin. Such was his vindictive feeling, that he once said, while eating a sheep's heart for his breakfast, and being complimented by one of his parasites on the keenness of his appetite, that he only wished it was

Dicky Costar's—meaning his opponent—he should eat it with much more satisfaction ; and I verily believed him.

With neither of these parties was I, or the coach I drove, at all connected ; and the London proprietor, horsing it all the way to Oxford, he committed everything to my management. I must confess that I was, for the time, highly pleased with the change I had made. It was summer time, and the road, as far as Maidenhead or Henley, was pleasant and populous. Consequently, the retail trade* was abundant—therefore very profitable to the man at the helm, as Jack would call the coachman. The company also was mostly of the first order. We were patronised liberally by some of the first houses of the Nobility and Gentry, whose mansions and estates lay in the counties of Oxford or Gloucester—particularly those of Somerset and Berke-

* The term given by the fraternity to short passengers.

ley; and I believe I may boast of being the first who put reins into the hand of the late Duke of Beaufort, then Marquis of Worcester, who soon became a proficient in the art. The other family had a seat at Cranford Bridge, about four miles beyond Hounslow, long the residence of the late Countess; and as the sons counted six or seven in number, I frequently had the honour of the company of one or other of them on the box.

I always found them free and affable, as I ever did most others of true Nobility, with whom I often came in contact.

On one occasion, I remember, when one of the junior members of the family, who has since rendered himself conspicuous in their unhappy division, accompanied me on the box, and we had spent the morning in agreeable conversation, I happened to say that I had never seen a certain celebrated actress off the stage, but that I

admired her very much on. "Oh," he said, "I expect them up to-day," meaning his brother and the lady. We had scarcely arrived at the "Roebuck" at Oxford, where I stopped, before a carriage drove up with four post horses, the owner of Berkeley Castle inside, with a lady, whom I immediately recognized as the one we had been speaking of. The Colonel I knew also, as who did not who had once seen his handsome person. My late companion went to the carriage-door and chatted a little; but before the fresh horses were put to, he called me to him, and, addressing the lady, said—

"Ann, here is a friend of mine, who has a great wish to be introduced to you."

Somewhat abashed at so sudden an appeal to my gallantry, raising my hat, I unhesitatingly stepped forward, when the lady held out her hand, and,

with one of her beautiful smiles, said—

“I am sure I shall be highly honoured by his acquaintance.”

There was only time for a few commonplaces on the beauty of the day, &c., and a laugh and a hearty shake of the hand, with “How are you, ——?” from her companion, when, the postillions being ready to start, I withdrew, with as an accomplished a farewell bow as I knew how to perpetrate, or perhaps the rules of society could desire. The author of this attack upon the simplicity of my morning’s conversation, accompanied me to the bar, where we renewed our gossip over a bottle of champagne.

The house where I stopped at Oxford—the “Roebuck”—was then kept by two young ladies, possessing other accomplishments, both mental and personal, besides those necessary for their station, without

that brusque and familiar air which generally characterises females brought up in an Inn—at the same time not assuming a particle of the affected importance common with good-looking landladies.

The time of my daily sojourn—that is, from two or half-past in the day till the following forenoon—passed agreeably enough; sometimes at my hotel, where I met a Fellow of one of the colleges, who was well known for a singular propensity he possessed to dive into the secrets and intrigues of the coaching community. This was a sort of morbid curiosity, which he inherited, perhaps, from his unfortunate ancestor, the Bishop of Rochester—who exercised the same feeling in more important concerns. He would almost daily come and chat with me. At other times perambulating the streets, or gossiping with the different tradesmen, or examining at my leisure the colleges and halls,

the celebrated library and theatre, and other buildings ; so that I could but contrast the place with the dull, low, uninviting spot in which I was lately condemned to spend my vacant hours ; and congratulate myself on the change.

My employer, knowing that Oxford was a place where harness-horses were sometimes to be picked up on more reasonable terms than in London, had commissioned me to look out and, as occasion might offer, purchase some for him. This I had done much to his satisfaction. One afternoon a tout, or man who was a sort of horse-dealer's cad, came and told me, as a great favour, of a horse that was to be disposed of for a little money. I went with him, and was shown a very useful coach horse. I asked to see him out. This was complied with, and, running my eye over him, and approving his action, I said, "Sound?"

"Perfectly; but I don't warrant him?"

"Age?"

"Six years old."

Looking in his mouth, I found this to be correct.

"Price?" I said.

"Ten pounds," was the reply.

I immediately concluded something was wrong, as he looked like a five-and-thirty pounds' horse.

"He's not a kicker?" I said.

"You can't make him kick," was the reply.

I was almost ashamed to say, "You won't warrant him quiet, I suppose?"

"You can't expect it, at that price; but all I have told you is true."

"Then I'll have him," I said.

I observed a titter on the lips of the stablemen as I followed him into the house to give him the money, when the seller candidly told me that he had given thirty

pounds for the horse, and had sold him two or three times for more money; but he had always been returned, as he would not go in harness. Not very well satisfied with my bargain, I walked away, desiring him to send the horse round to the "Roebuck."

Early the next morning I borrowed a break, harnessed him, and put him to with another horse, but he would not move; and, touching him with the whip, he reared right on end, then threw himself down, and there lay. At this I scratched my head, and thought it was a bad case, when my friend who had kindly put me up to this great bargain called to me and said, "Master, master, light a truss of straw and put under him!" Nothing loth to make trial of such a remedy, as I had heard of it before, though I had never seen it practised, and there not being many

people about, as it was early in the morning, we unbuckled his traces, got him out, and with the other horse drew the break out in the corn market, and put him to again, as I was not to be beaten without a further trial. My friend, therefore, procured me a whisp of straw, and strewed it on the ground under him, and when I was ready set fire to it; the animal made two or three plunges clear of the straw, and then threw himself down.

Satisfied now that he might be made to go, but not by such means, I thought I would try another element which I had before seen applied with success. After getting him up, I had him taken down to the canal, where I found a barge just going to start with two horses at length; giving the bargeman 2s. 6d. to lend me some draught harness, with his permission we put him

in behind the other two, first taking the precaution to have the barge moored clear of the quay and other craft. We then moved on, when the brute threw himself about—first up in the air—then down on his knees—up again—then forward—then back on his haunches: but the two fore horses kept on, and their traces, acting upon the barge, did not give him time to lay down, and, after two or three attempts to baffle us, he rolled off the towing-path into the canal.

Here, after two or three plunges, and immersed in water, the tackle holding good, he regained his feet and the towing-path at the same time; and the other two horses keeping their places and their pace, and the barge being in motion, there was nothing left for him but to keep quietly on, or put up with another ducking. He chose the former, walked up to his collar, and took his

share of draught for about two miles, without the least attempt at gibbing. We then took him out and returned to the "Roebuck." The coach arriving in about half-an-hour, I put him in off-wheel and drove him to Benson, a distance of twelve miles, our first stage; and no horse ever went better or quieter.

The next day I drove him back, and the report of this singular feat having spread through the city, I had all the stable fraternity in Oxford to greet my return, and not believing such a thing possible, to assure themselves of the identity of the animal; for it appeared that he had been tried by many of Mr. Costar's men, who had all pronounced him incurable, and he had been returned accordingly, as the man from whom I bought him had told me. I continued to drive him as long as the coach lasted; and it fell to my lot, a year or two later, to renew my ac-

quaintance with him in another team from the same establishment.

It has often occurred to me, that the spot where I tried the experiment of fire is the site where those sturdy defenders of the reformed religion, Ridley and Latimer, suffered martyrdom; a splendid monument has since been erected in honour of those champions of our creed.

The late Lord Macaulay, in one of his early essays — written, I believe, in his rooms at Trinity — asserts the claims of his Alma Mater to supremacy over that of the sister University; and states, as an argument for it, that Cambridge had the honour of educating the two Bishops — and Oxford the honour of burning them. I am not a member of either University, as these pages can testify, nor can I decide the question of controversial superiority; but I have been a long time a member of

a constituency very near the University, in which Lord Macaulay was, a year or two back, elected to the very highest dignity in that enlightened and important body.*

Now, that constituency possess the unenviable distinction of having had their representatives twice unseated for bribery; besides having had the honour to entertain a commission, that in the fulfilment of their office discovered, and made public, unmistakable proofs of long-continued gross and unlawful practices; an honour, I believe, that a similar corporate body, as nearly allied to the University of Oxford, has never yet reached.

To proceed: If I were desired to point out that part of my coaching career in which I found most pleasure, or, in plain terms, which road I liked best, I should certainly select the Oxford, as surpassing

* High Steward of the Borough of Cambridge.

all others for those qualities which generally attract young men desirous of becoming distinguished in their vocation.

In the first place, the exit from the metropolis is from the West, or most fashionable end. The "White Horse Cellar," or the "Glo'ster Coffee House," in Piccadilly, would be the point of assembly of the *élite* of the amateurs, patrons, friends, and acquaintances, of each well-known practitioner—who come to criticise their style, examine their team, one by one, survey the drag—and then say a word or two in praise of the whole equipment or turn-out.

There was nothing of this sort at Shore-ditch, or Mile End, at the "Elephant and Castle," or the "Bricklayer's Arms." In its place there was the gape of an indifferent and ignorant multitude, or the slang of the low and vulgar cad. The "Angel," or

“Peacock,” at Islington, came nearest to the West-end *rendezvous*; but were at a great distance, except in the number of mails and other conveyances, that issue from the North side of the great emporium.

Then, again, the road itself was much frequented, not only by the equipages of royalty, but displayed the constant traffic of the nobility and gentry, in their ingress and egress to and from the seat of Government; it was also the scene where those amateurs and patrons, the members of the B. D. C., exhibited their love for, and skill in, the art of driving. The “Black Dog,” at Bedfont, about fourteen miles off the stones, was the house to which they often resorted, the late Sir Henry Peyton at their head, and where the author’s own kind friend and patron, the late Henry Villebois, Esq., was generally present to discuss the rules of the B. D. C.

over a solid repast, and to award proof of their approbation to some deserving member of the profession. The distance, too, fifty-eight miles, was sufficient to render the ride a pleasure without being a toil; the company were mostly of the middle and upper classes, and the place itself afforded ample, rational, and pleasing amusement.

It was with considerable regret, then, to me, as the autumn approached, I found that a sort of compromise had taken place between my employer and one of the parties at Oxford — the one I had so great a dislike to; and, to my great annoyance, I was officially informed that my *heart-devouring* friend was to work the coach from Oxford to Henley, and that, to confine my services to the London proprietor, I should be required to drive to Henley and back in the day. This was a beneficial arrangement for me,

as I had two coaches a day, and but one home, which would very much reduce my expenses; but, at the same time, I had no faith in the stability of the concern, as I was well aware the new partners had it in their power to compromise it at any time, and that I should then be thrown overboard.

However, it went on for some little time, and I had nothing whatever to find fault with all through the autumn. I had between three or four hours to spend at Henley, which I managed to get rid of without being infected with idleness, or *ennui*, as it is usually termed.

A clergyman who had, from my youth up, been the officiating minister at Portsmouth, had only lately been removed to Henley.* I would, therefore, frequently call, and have half an hour's chat with him. I had had the temerity to publish

* The Rev. T. G. Bussell.

a sermon I penned on the death of the old king, George III., which, without permission, I had dedicated to this excellent divine. It was at the instigation of some friends at St. Albans I had written it, because I happened to say the discourse I had heard at the Abbey church did not come up to my idea of what a sermon ought to be, on such a subject. Here the obsequies of the deceased monarch were celebrated; and when the choir of the old building was hung with black and lit with torches, it presented a novel and imposing scene. The printing this production may have been an unpardonable act of vanity; the dedication was an expression of heartfelt gratitude to one, whose eloquent expositions of the Gospel, and clear and imposing manner with which he read our beautiful Liturgy, were indelibly impressed on my memory.

But the chief occurrence that marked

my short sojourn at this pretty little Market town, with its spacious street—its well-built houses—their gardens and meads, flanked by the beautiful river—from which it takes its name—the lofty hills on all sides, forming a splendid amphitheatre—was a total eclipse of the sun. This was the only perfect eclipse that has occurred in my memory: that of 1858 was annular, and the great luminary was never quite obscured, but appeared in the form of a crescent, of a greater or less magnitude, as our satellite passed over its disc; therefore did it disappoint the expectations of the credulous multitude, who looked for an absence of all light, birds going to roost, and other symptoms of coming night.

The eclipse of 1820 was a far greater obscuration, inasmuch as the planet Venus was plainly to be seen with the naked eye at noonday in mid-heaven—a posi-

tion in which she is never visible, not even to the telescopic view of the astronomer, and therefore the fact is scarcely credible to the uninitiated in that most sublime and interesting of all sciences. In a letter written to a friend on the day I have thus described it:—

“The single star, too, twinkling so soon after noon, and the awful gloom cast over the atmosphere by so great an obscuration of the source of light, produced a scene so pleasingly singular, so rarely beautiful, so divinely sublime, that the remembrance of it, I trust, will never be erased from my mind, or the impression it left removed from my heart. And here I must regret the want of that knowledge, which in my youth I could so readily and would so eagerly have pursued, and with proper care, perhaps, have attained. I envied those who, with more ample fortune, and with abler friends, had had the means, the

opportunity, and the inclination, to render themselves familiar with art and science—their intelligence first scanning the trackless desert—then the wide expanse of ocean—and last the starry heavens; thus laying up for themselves ‘treasures upon earth’ that none but themselves can fully enjoy; for how little must be my knowledge of a subject like this, compared to the information possessed by one who, one hundred years ago, could compute the time of this eclipse so exactly as to foretell it to the very minute—I mean Sir Isaac Newton. But the time and the opportunity have gone, never to be recalled. I have no alternative but to be content with my own ignorance.

It was somewhere about this time that the following incident occurred:—

On taking the reins at Henley, and looking round, I observed on the roof, sitting on the near side, an elderly gentle-

man, with a youth of rather forbidding appearance, apparently about twenty years of age. I had long been accustomed to speculate on the character of my companions, and though I jumped to conclusions that were not always borne out by the results, still I was in the main not far wrong.

I remember a porter I had on my last drag, who, with no other information than the brass plate on a passenger's portmanteau, would address him in language that implied a long, though respectful acquaintance with the gentleman's family. After calling him by name, he would say, "How's the good lady, sir?" Sometimes he would go so far as to ask after them individually. "How's Master John or Master George," chancing the individual having any such ties, or indeed any ties at all; and if it proved so, this civilest of porters was never in any way abashed.

We had not ascended Henley Hill before I discovered that the two gentlemen were not on the best terms with each other—the one endeavoured to impart his feelings on the beauty of the scenery, while pointing out familiar objects of admiration; the other would pout, and frown, and snub—sometimes looking on with a sulky and insulting air, at others denounce in gross language the kind and conciliatory manner of his senior.

It did not take me long to discover that they were Father and son, and with some reason I surmised that the Father was a clergyman, and had been to Oxford to remove his hopeful, who had been placed under the ban of the University. All attempts on the part of the one to divest or allure the thoughts of the other from the loss of some fancied selfish enjoyment, or the sense of deserved degradation, were only met with angry

and evil looks, or downright abuse, till at length the former was silent from despair, perhaps from fear that his fellow-passengers might take notice of his reiterated insults; and with a severe, though softly spoken remonstrance, his eyes swimming in tears, he closed a most painful dialogue.

During the journey my heart alternately rose in indignation at the perverse conduct of the son, and sunk in the deepest sympathy with the heart-broken feelings of the Parent, expressed in his sad and rueful countenance. Once or twice, indeed, I felt disposed to interfere, and to attempt to reason with the young man upon his want of filial respect; still I thought, as it was no affair of mine, I had no right to interfere—so I held my tongue.

Arrived at the end of our journey, the old gentleman, in getting off the coach in

the Inn yard, missed his hold and fell; he had not waited for the ladder, nor had I dismounted. He lay by the side of the fore-wheel, and calling his companion by his Christian name, asked for help, when the son, looking down, cried: "You may lay there, you old —— and be damned, before I'll help you." He was immediately raised by the porter, who had run to his assistance.

Standing on the foot-board, I could no longer restrain myself; so, taking hold of the fellow's arm, I asked him if he was that gentleman's son. His answer, "What's that to you?" only further raised my choler.

"It is much to me," I replied, "and to everyone who has witnessed your unfeeling conduct this day; you are a disgrace to humanity, and though your offence is not punishable by law, it deserves a d—— good horse-whipping; and if you do not

instantly get down and assist your father, I will administer it myself." I made him descend with me; I then asked the gentleman if he were much hurt. He replied in the negative, though he appeared to be very much shaken. He expressed a wish for a hackney coach, and, having attended him into it, I directed my porter to get on the box, and see that he was taken to his proper destination.

As the Winter approached the loading fell off, so much so on that road in particular, that the old Cheltenham coach was discontinued, and the traffic left entirely to us. Even then we loaded very indifferently. Finding that what little we did carry interfered with the "Oxford Defiance," the pet drag of my would-be cannibal friend, he persuaded my London employer to drop it, which he suddenly did a week or two after Christmas, leaving me to ruminate on

the great error I had committed in leaving a certainty for an uncertainty, and to contemplate the little chance I had of future employment.

CHAPTER VIII.

AN INTERREGNUM.

A Bad Prospect — Sunday's Employment : its Consequences — Spring Gardens — The Great Chirurgeon — Irrelevant Conversation — Convalescence — A Flash Dragsman — Useless Application — A Visit to the Infernal Regions — Lobster Salad — Gratitude — A Country Drive — Glance at Paradise — Disappointment — A Bold Stroke for a Box.

IT being then the depth of Winter, when travelling is at its lowest ebb, there was no immediate prospect of any new start, and to wait for a vacancy in the old established coaches was similar to waiting for dead men's shoes. Consequently, my situation was far from enviable. Reflec-

tions on the past, which I could not scare from my mind, and a restless and not very hopeful temperament, although it did not altogether deprive me of reason, caused me to commit many unreasonable acts.

I was prevented in the Spring seeking an appointment by an accident that had nearly put an end to my ever standing in need of one.

My father's establishment in the City, of which he still retained possession, besides the long coaches, was a sort of rendezvous for short stages — that is, coaches from places of ten or twenty miles distant, that would come in in the morning, and return in the afternoon and evening. Some dispute had taken place between the Proprietors of the Kingston and Hampton coaches, and an old gentleman living at Cobham, in Surrey, who had been for a long time connected with

the Portsmouth and Chichester coaches, had taken up the quarrel, and was determined, as the phrase was, to run the other off the road.

I had been out when, one evening, my Father sent to my lodgings in St. Martin's Lane, to ask me to go down to Cobham with him on the Sunday morning. It was Easter Sunday, the second anniversary of the one that had already influenced my fortunes. My Father drove me down in his buggy. We dined with the disputatious old gentleman, and partook of some of his excellent port. The coach-maker from Guildford had brought the new drag, which, with the four horses and harness, stood already at the "White Lion," to which place we repaired after dinner. After taking some more wine, the horses, which had all been purchased indiscriminately but the Friday preceding at the repository in Barbican, were put to,

when the owner, our host, said to me—

“You take hold of them: you know how to manage them, I know, and I’ll sit beside you.”

As the horses were all strangers to me, as well as to one another, I did not vastly like the task. Being eighty-three or eighty-four years old, this gentleman’s limbs were not so pliant as they had been. However, he got up on the box, and we started on the road to Kingston, his nephew—a man between thirty and forty—the coachmaker, and a third person, occupying the roof, the intended dragsman sitting behind, and my father following in his buggy.

At Esher we pulled up at the “Bear,” and were greeted by pretty well the whole household of Claremont, who must needs join in the libations that were poured forth to the success of the new drag. This was repeated at the turn-

pike; when the lessee, an old hand—hearing of the intended new start, from which it was more than probable he would be the only one to derive any profit—shut the gate, and planted a table, loaded with wine and glasses, in the centre of the road. There was no alternative; and after doing due honour to his generous spirit, we proceeded at a good pace to the “King’s Arms,” at Kingston, as this was to be the first and principal house of call in the regular way. My passengers all got down, while I went a little farther to turn, which I did in good style, and came back to the door of the Inn. Here we stopped nearly an hour, still imbibing. On remounting, the coachmaker, an active, able young man, said to the old gentleman—

“I’ll sit on the box now.” He got up, while the other took his place on the roof—a most providential change for

him, as will presently be seen. We proceeded over Kingston Bridge, where I had never been before.

"Turn to the left," said my friend on the box.

I did so, and had not gone 100 yards, when some men at a public-house (where the coach, unknown to me, was to stop) put up their hands, and the leaders flew under the gateway. The coachmaker instantly jumped off, or he must have been killed. I, with much presence of mind, pulled the wheel-horses against the gatepost, at the same moment threw myself forward, and received a crushing blow in my shoulders and back, thereby saving my head, which otherwise must have been literally smashed; as it was, I was dreadfully injured, to all appearance irrecoverably so. The old gentleman escaped unhurt, though beside himself with fright. He was soon assisted down, and then I

was lifted off, carried into a room, and laid on my back on the floor, where my father for some time stood weeping over me.

The doctor was sent for, and was quickly in attendance. He pronounced it a very serious case, though he hoped it would not be a fatal one. He bled me freely from the arm, and ordered me to be put to bed, as it would be impossible to remove me under a month.

In this state did I lay for three days; the doctor in regular attendance. He had by bleeding and potions prevented fever; and the pain from the blow having in a great measure subsided, though I still felt very sore, as well as weak, I was determined to leave the place for my Father's house in London; and learn, from the highest source, the amount of injury my frame had sustained.

My friend, the coachmaker, whose

family I had long known, sat up with me the first night, and did not depart till one of my sisters arrived from London the following morning, and remained.

On the Thursday morning, with her help I managed to dress myself; and it being a fine day, went out and sat under an apple-tree in the garden, where the doctor, to his great surprise, about eleven o'clock discovered me reading; he seemed glad to find me so much better, but thought I was running a great risk in leaving my room so soon. In the afternoon my Father came down, and all things being settled, I and my sister returned with him to town.

In the morning I went to Spring Gardens, and knocked at the door of the great surgeon and anatomist. The door was opened by a servant out of livery, and after a little time I was introduced and ushered into his presence.

He was sitting at his *escritoir* at the window, with his back towards me, apparently engaged in literary composition. His man-servant walked up to him, gave him a note, and instantly retired. Without casting a glance at me, or asking any question, he handed me the note, not even turning his head, and said—

“Have the goodness to open that, sir, will you?”

Strange as I thought such a request, I complied, and of course made myself acquainted with the contents. After some few minutes, still remaining in the same attitude, he said—

“Have you read it, sir?”

“I have.”

“Who is it from?”

“Lord Combermere, Sir Astley.”

“Do you know him?” he said.

“I have seen him when he was Sir Stapleton Cotton.”

“Indeed! What did you know of him?”

“I only know that he commanded the cavalry in the Peninsula, and was always considered the best-dressed man in the army.”

Upon this he put down his pen, turned towards me, and smiled. I perfectly remember that smile, and it may appear simple in me to record so simple an occurrence; but Sir Astley's was no common smile. It was not that of condescension—it was not that of a courtier; neither was it one of withering contempt, or of specious, designing villany; but it was one that lit up his fine and manly features with goodfellowship and benevolence. I fancied, too, there was a mark of silent recognition in it when he said—

“And pray, what brings you here this morning?”

I then related to him, as plainly and briefly as I could, the nature of the accident, and explained to him my symptoms and feelings.

"Let me assist you off with your coat," said he, observing I could not raise my right arm. "Now your waistcoat." Then, inserting his hand under my linen, he passed his fingers down my spine. Without farther consideration, he then said, "Every ligament of your backbone is ruptured. Have you a wife?"

"No," I replied, "unfortunately I am a widower."

"Well, you must procure thirty yards of calico, and get some female to wind it round your body as she would swathe an infant, and do not remove it for at least six months. Remember also to keep in a recumbent posture as much as possible."

I described to him the height of the gateway—that it would only admit the

coach without any one being on it. He assured me that it was a miracle I had escaped as I had done, and that it would take a considerable time before my lungs would heal and I should entirely lose the pain and soreness complained of, as the whole cavity of my chest was bruised. Finally he told me I had better go in the country and keep quiet for a while. I thanked him for his advice, deposited the usual fee, and was about to depart—

“What’s the price of venison now—do you know?” he asked.

I answered in some surprise, “No, I do not.”

“What! have you not had a buck from Whittlebury forest lately?”

“No, indeed, Sir Astley.”

He smiled again, as I did, when the cause of the question suddenly occurred to me.

“Well, let me see you again before you

go into the country," he added; and then wished me good morning.

When I returned and gave an account of my interview, one of my sisters, who had attended my bedside at Kingston, purchased the necessary supply of calico, in which, with the assistance of my father's housekeeper, I was tightly and speedily enveloped. A letter was then dispatched to my married Sister in Hampshire, to know if it would be convenient for me to take up my abode there for a little time, which was responded to in the same kind and affectionate spirit she had ever evinced for my welfare and comfort.

After taking a few days to dispose of my lodgings and settle my affairs in St. Martin's Lane, where I had furnished some apartments, I repaired again to Spring Gardens. Sir Astley seemed pleased to see me, and congratulated me on my

improved condition, adding, I could not do better than follow out his advice. I told him I was about to leave town the following day for Hampshire. "Not into Hertfordshire then?" he said, interrogatively. I said, no—Hampshire was my native County. Upon my naming the locality, he asked me many questions as to the medical practitioner of that place, who it appeared had been a very favourite pupil of his, and then dwelt with remarkable exactness and much sympathy upon an unfortunate fatal incident that had happened but a few years before at Petersfield, to the gentleman to whose practice his young friend had succeeded. A poor sailor had been found dead in that neighbourhood, and in sewing up the body, after a *post mortem* examination, he punctured his finger, and decomposition having already taken place, the wound festered, mortifi-

cation ensued, and put an end to his existence in a few days.

Sir Astley then reverted to Hertfordshire, and asked me if I had seen my friend at Redbourn lately. I told him that I had lost sight of him for a long time.

“Pray,” asked he, “did he ever pay you for the buck you procured for him from the duke of Grafton’s keeper at Whittlebury Forest?”

I said, that in the hurry of his departure I supposed he must have forgotten it; but that I freely forgave him; adding, that the doctor was a good fellow in the main, though fortune had been hard with him, and that, in his own nautical language, he was altogether an odd fish.

Sir Astley again put on one of his good-natured smiles. He enquired the origin of our acquaintance, which I frankly told him. He listened with great atten-

tion, though I fancied he had been made acquainted with the principal features of the doctor's history before, and something of mine. After half-an-hour's agreeable chat he rose, and shaking my hand, bade me farewell, desiring me to write to him from Hampshire, that he might be assured of my convalescence.

Under my sister's care, and by paying strict attention to my doctor's instructions, I gradually got better, but my spirits did not keep pace with my bodily improvement. A melancholy and despairing feeling had seized me; and, as I got out, led me to the churchyard, where it would find vent in odes and elegies of too gloomy a nature for public or even private inspection. I did not at all extend my visits, nor indeed did I seem to have delight in the former scenes of my enjoyments, and my brother the lieutenant was the only visitor in whose society I had any pleasure

during my summer's residence at Catherine-
erington.

In the latter end of the autumn I returned to town, determined to shake off the hopelessness which was becoming habitual, and to seek, as common sense and necessity dictated, some means of obtaining a subsistence.

During my short sojourn at Oxford, I had made acquaintance with two or three celebrated characters who figured conspicuously on that road, of whom I have attempted to give a sketch of in the early part of this narrative. Among them was one who stood very high in his own estimation. He had risen by a peculiar method, made up of arrogance and persuasion, vulgarity and venality, strong nerve and recklessness of all consequences—to all of which it would be impossible to give the reader an adequate insight—and had become a man of great notoriety.

He had been the principal means of stirring up opposition after opposition on almost every line of road out of Oxford; but though he had done considerable injury to the old-established concerns, he had not at all benefited himself. Indeed it was inconvenient for him to remain in a place where he was now too well known, and where there were too many claims upon him. So, after recovering from the effects of a recent encounter with an opponent at Stokenchurch Hill, where he had, technically speaking, floored his drag, and come off with a broken skull and the loss of an eye, he, on abandoning his wife and family, had come up to town.

It was sometime after this that I met him on my return from Hampshire—like myself, soliciting employment from the same establishment: but there was this difference in our manner of seeking it—he considered that he was conferring a favour in

offering his services to the head and owner of the establishment ; I deemed an appointment only a right I was entitled to from former promises and from the treatment I had lately received from the same individual. However, we both met with the same success, or, more justly speaking, the same disappointment ; and the manner in which our applications were received, and the effect they had upon each of us, were equally remarkable.

He was consulted, and his advice asked as to the policy and the time of putting on a coach on this or that road, and what country proprietors he could get to join. This pleased his self-importance as well as his inclination, for Harry* was never so happy as when in opposition, and was ready to be the instrument in the hands of any unscrupulous London man, in endea-

* Charlton was killed by the overturn of Mr. Costar's Hereford coach, near Ross.

vouring, by whatever means, to increase his establishment; consequently, he was never dejected, but bided his time. I was put off with empty promises, that were from time to time as far from fulfilment as on the day the Cheltenham coach was discontinued. A twelvemonth or near had passed away, when one evening, grown desperate by such repeated disappointment, I met him at the end of the gateway.

"Where are you going, young man?" said my one-eyed friend, who had been in conversation with the principal but a few minutes before.

"I don't know," I replied, in a careless and indifferent manner.

"Come along with me then," said he.

I followed him instinctively—silently brooding over my own wrongs, and lamenting my almost destitute condition. We walked along Cockspur Street, under the

Opera colonnade, turned into and crossed St. James's Square. My friend was a man of a very few words—indeed his vocabulary was awkwardly deficient, and he was grossly ignorant on every subject except that of coaching. Yet he was generally pretty well dressed, though not in the extreme of either the fashion or his profession. He was a fine made man, though not tall; his neck and shoulders being a model for a sculptor, always reminded a sporting friend of mine of Gully, of fighting celebrity. His features were not bad, though a little inclined to the gladiator style, and the loss of his eye had added to his countenance a quaint, if not sinister expression. He always walked with a stick, which gave him more the appearance of a respectable London horse-dealer than anything I can compare him to.

We trudged along without exchanging a

word, except, perhaps, as to the name of a coach that might be passing us, till presently in a street leading out of, or adjoining St. James' Square, we came to a house with the door wide open, but with an inner door closed, in the upper part of which was a strong light, that enabled a person inside to perceive who was coming. My companion knocked, and the door was partially and cautiously opened. A glance at me, and a question to my guide, were sufficient; we were admitted, and I began slowly to ascend the stairs.

I had scarcely time to consider, or ask my conductor the nature of the house to which he had brought me, when at the top we entered—through a pair of folding doors—a large parlour or saloon, full of well-dressed people, some seated round a large table, others standing, but most, if not all, silently and seriously

engaged. In the centre of a table on one side I observed a hoary-headed, venerable-looking gentleman, dealing out a handful of cards, and placing them in two lines before him; opposite to him sat another with a long staff or rake in his hand, which ever and anon, upon his senior's muttering a word or two, he would extend right and left to gather up the silver and notes (there being but little gold, Peel's Bill not having yet passed) and then distribute to one and the other the amount they had left on the opposite two segments, out of the four, into which the cloth on the table—alternately red and black—was divided.

I was soon convinced that I was in one of those houses that I had frequently heard and read of in books both of the past and present century, which have been, and are justly denominated a pandemonium. On looking

round, I thought I could recognise one, two or more faces. Indeed, one in particular, whose services had gained him rank and distinction in the Navy, I could not be mistaken, from the very peculiar expression of countenance an unfortunate imperfection of speech gave him. He and many others I could see intent upon the game, their features contracting in frowns or expanding in smiles as their different chances came off. My companion soon obtained a seat, and every now and then I could see his one eye turned up to the ceiling as if asking there for information, upon what colour he should deposit his chance.

“Make your game, make your game, Gentlemen,” was intermittently reiterated by the venerable dealer and his associate; and urged by the nods and gesticulation of my introducer, and imbibing at the same time the general infatuation, I ventured to

throw a half-crown on the table—the lowest sum the rules of the room admitted. The game was made, and the cards were dealt. I scarcely regarded the issue, my eyes wandering round the crowded room, and my mind wrapt in contemplating so novel a scene, consequently I did not take any money up. The game was made time after time, till the spot where I had deposited my half-crown was covered with notes—the venerable gentleman looking at me very hard every time he doubled the heap. All eyes were turned on me, till the dealer stopt and asked whose money that was, as the stake, as they termed it, exceeded their limit, that is 100*l.*, when my friend Monops exclaimed, “Why don’t you take your money up, young man?” Not a little disconcerted by this polite admonition, at the same time flushed with joy at so unexpected an acquisition of fortune,

I managed to retain sufficient self-possession to reach over, for I had not been seated, grasp the notes with one hand, and put up the half-crowns that lay under them with the other, and thrust both indiscriminately into my breeches pocket.

After some little time my friend and I retired, and entering an hotel in the Haymarket, I proceeded to count my gains, which amounted to 127*l.* 17*s.* 6*d.* We then regaled ourselves with some lobster salad and other delicacies, I of course standing treat; but this was not attended with any considerable expense, as since his accident my friend Monops had never drank anything stronger than tea, of which he imbibed a large quantity, and always had a great objection to make what he termed a hog-tub of his internals. Upon my asking him how it was that I had been so successful, or how he could account for my good

fortune—"A run upon red, young man," was all I got in reply; and with a little further comment on the evening's occurrence, we retired to our respective domiciles.

Waking in the morning, and recalling what had passed, I certainly did not repent of the adventure, and I do not pretend to be an exception to those who are seduced by the first favours of the strumpet Fortune; but I did not, like the generality of unfortunate youths who are first entrapped into those dens of iniquity, endeavour immediately to follow up my success; indeed, I could not class myself as such, for I had nothing to lose, except what they had furnished me with, which I did not feel disposed to risk again.

It will be thought, too, that I should have been grateful to the friend through whose means I had been put into a little ready cash; but so perverse is the human

heart, that my feelings were of the very opposite nature; and I seemed, in anticipation, to loathe the very appearance of the man to whom I ought to have considered myself indebted. There was, however, nothing in common between us; his manners were coarse, his associations vulgar; conversation he had none; and whatever his morals may have been, abstinence seemed to me to be his only virtue, and that a very negative one; it must be confessed, therefore, that it was chiefly my dislike to be seen with him, in the company of those I took to be gentlemen—indeed some of whom I knew were—than any repugnance I had to the fascinating vice, that kept me from repeating my visit.

Glad of an opportunity of absenting myself from the locality of my daily attendance, and stealing into the country—above all, to avoid my last night's companion, I

rose, dressed, and had an early breakfast; then, putting a change into my carpet bag, and taking it in my hand, I strolled leisurely towards the "Peacock" at Islington. St. Albans was the attraction, but it was in vain that my inclination—true as the magnetic needle to the pole—turned in that direction.

The Bedford coach coming up, I got on it, and had a very pleasant ride through Welwyn, Hitchin, and Shefford, to that neat little County Town. After taking my dinner at the "Swan," and sauntering about the place, in which I saw nothing to attract or distract my attention, I enquired for the house of a person whom I knew—one who drove another Bedford coach, that went to the great metropolis by a different route, and passed through a village where I was informed I might meet with an object, the sight of which would be ample reward for my trouble.

My friend of the "Bedford Pilot" was an old ally, and, like myself, had been reduced by circumstances; that is, from being the proprietor of an Inn on the North road, where, by coaching and posting, he had hoped to preserve a decent provision for a rising family—to picking up his crumbs on the box. I knew the man well, for he had been long connected with us in the York and Leeds coaches. He could not aspire to any of the qualifications that marked the most favoured of the fraternity, but he was a straightforward, honest, and most respectable man. I spent a very pleasant evening with him and his family, and finding, in answer to a few questions, adroitly, though furtively, put, that I had not been deceived in the object I had in view, I determined, at his invitation, to accompany him in the morning.

After a delightful drive by Ampthill, Selsoe, and Luton, near which places are

the mansions of the Earls of Cork and de Grey, and of the Marquis of Bute, I took leave of my friend in the pretty little village of Harpenden.

I subsequently took a ride to Portsmouth, and discharged a few obligations of a private nature, stopping principally at the house of my deceased wife's brother's widow. I took my children with me, and spent here our Christmas. My thoughts would sometimes revert to the scene that had so dazzled my understanding in St. James's Square. I had been at races—at Epsom in particular, as well as in other sporting circles, where I had witnessed and partook of the excitement, in a small way, that such meetings generally produced, where the qualities of the different animals were exhibited, and their merits decided by what appeared a fair competition. A numerous and joyous assemblage gave animation to the scene, and few were those of

any class who did not, from some cause or other, feel inclined to have a little venture on a favourite animal. But this was far away from that deep-set, ardent and demoniacal spirit of gaming I for the first time was introduced to by Monops. At the time I did not give it much consideration; only wondering how one of his grade could find his way among men who appeared to belong to a very different class.

On my return to town, I found he had, by undeniable assurance, obtained employment, having been put on a new Birmingham day-coach, started in opposition. I was very much annoyed at his being preferred to me, and more, by the proprietors telling me that he was more fitted for it than I was; they not giving me even a distant prospect of success. I resorted in a pet to the scene of my former success, where I soon exhausted what I had left of my ill-gotten gains.

To the uninitiated—that is, to any but the heartless reveller in the orgies of a Pandemonium—where all the evil passions of our nature are developed—success and loss are equally destructive of moral obligations and religious duty. The first carries him into the region of extravagance and folly, the other commits him to the lowest pit of despondency and despair.

I was silently and gloomily lamenting my sad fate, when one of the book-keepers at the establishment where I had so repeatedly sought employment, and who had been in my father's service, sent to say he wished to speak to me. I hurried to the office. He told me he had just heard that a certain person who drove out of the yard was about to leave. Upon my doubting the truth of his information, he assured me that the man had taken an Inn on the road; and consequently, to make use of a hackneyed term, must vacate his seat on

or before a certain day then fast approaching. Seats of another kind are frequently vacated, and as eagerly sought for by hungry applicants.

There were four proprietors on this road, each possessing an equal right to the appointment; but the London man was considered the one whose sanction or interest it was most desirous to obtain; therefore, to him I went in the morning and stated my business. He had not heard anything about the man leaving, and said that he could not, or should not, trouble himself in the matter. I then waited the arrival of the coach in the evening, and asked the driver himself, as he and I had been acquainted some little time. He decidedly told me that it was not his intention to leave. I told this to the book-keeper, who smiled and replied, "he will leave," and hinted to me the reason for his denying it. Thus was I

bandied about, from one to the other, without any satisfactory arrangement. At last I went to my old friend the wine-merchant, whom I have before spoken of, and at whose house I always received the kindest hospitality. I asked him to use the power of his rhetoric with the principal in London in my favour; he entered warmly into my feelings, for I explained everything to him as regarded my future, and he promised to do all I asked him.

"I shall be sure to see him," said he; "and you had better come and dine with me on Sunday, when I will tell you the result."

Accordingly, I was true to my appointment, and met with a hearty welcome; but he first told me that he regretted very much he had not been successful, for the man was not going to leave.

"Well," I replied, "it is very strange;

I know from the best authority he takes possession of his new house on Monday."

"Did he tell you so?"

"No, but it is a fact."

"Well, if that be the case, we will first have some dinner, and then arrange the affair."

As soon, therefore, as the cloth was cleared, and we had a glass or two of wine, he said:—

"Now, take my advice."

I listened with much attention.

"Get your box-coat and whip; say nothing to anybody, but go down to Cambridge by the Fakenham coach this evening; in the morning go to the 'Bull' at Cambridge, and when the coach arrives from Lynn, if anybody asks you any questions, say you are come to take the coach up."

I gave myself but a few moments to consider, and then determined to follow

his advice to the letter; for, if neither of the proprietors had appointed a man—and from the occupant persisting in telling them all, he was not going to leave, I could not think they had—I might have a chance.

Arrived at Cambridge, I slept where the coach stopped, and in due time made my appearance at the “Bull.” The first person I saw with whom I was acquainted was the Cambridge proprietor, who shook hands with me, and asked kindly after my Father, whom he had known many years, having been engaged in business with him. He presently demanded—

“What brings you to Cambridge?”

“I am come to take the Lynn coach up, Sir,” I replied.

He looked very much surprised, and asked where the other man was. No one could tell him. Then saying, it was

very strange altogether, he turned away.

I asked for the way-bill, which was given to me, and the horses being put to, without further conversation I mounted the box and drove off.

END OF VOL. II.



